

# GOOD GOVERNANCE IN INDIA TOWARDS ACCOUNTABILITY TO PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GUJARAT

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## Abstract

Good governance has been a buzz word in the public administration. Good governance is a way of measuring the public institutions' efficiency to manage the public affairs and public resources in a desired way. It depends on specialised institutions and economic resources available for ensuring the governance. It covers use of natural resources on sustained basis, conservation and protection of the environment. . The present paper seeks to analyse the cases of good governance in the national scenario and initiatives taken by the state governments with special emphasis on Gujarat. It also aims at providing a comprehensive analysis of the constraints that undermine the good governance. As a case in the point, the constraints such as corruption, weak political and administrative accountability and overburdened judiciary are all hindering the progress of good governance. Counter to these challenges, many state governments have undertaken e-governance, citizen charter, citizen report card and establishment of lokpal and lokayukta. While analysing all these initiatives, the use of Information Technology (IT) initiated by the Government of Gujarat has been analysed in detail.

The paper is classified into two sections. The section I deals with the hurdles of good governance; whereas section II describes the efforts to improve the governance at the national and state level. Using the secondary information, the paper has analysed the e-governance programmes and examined the ranking of the states on parameters of the governance. The paper strongly argues that the communication technology plays a pre-dominant role in ushering the good governance. In the course of discussion, e-governance initiatives of the states have been cited as instances. Finally, the analysis rests upon the assumption that the overall human and social development are the key factors to the good governance and economic growth of the nation.

**Key words:** Public Administration, E-governance, Good Governance, Accountability, Technology

## INDIA'S GOVERNANCE: THE CONTEXT

Governance issues deserve much attention today. India cannot become a developed nation without improving the governance. Poor quality of governance prohibits India's position of a high income country. The delayed procedure in administration is a barrier to investment and good governance. The World Bank's 2018 business survey ranks India at 77 position in the list of 190 countries on the parameter of ease of doing business.<sup>1</sup> Much worse, in India, a long period of 124 days required to obtain a business license.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, India ranks at 78 in the list of 180 countries according to the Corruption Perception Index 2018 undertaken by the Transparency International.<sup>3</sup> India's infrastructure is far below the international standard. After independence, the government focussed on infrastructure development by building, owning, and managing projects. Because of the slow pace of development in infrastructure, India ranked at 40 out of 137 countries for its infrastructure in

1. The World Bank, Rankings and Ease of Doing Business Score (2018), available at <http://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings>, (accessed on March 19, 2019).

2. Sud, Inder. (2010). Governance for Modern Societies, Combining Smarter Government Decentralization and Accountable to People" in Harinder S. Kohli and Anil Sood (eds.) India 2039: An Affluent Society in One Generation, Sage, New Delhi.

3. Corruption Perceptions Index (2018) available at: <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018> (accessed on March 19, 2019).

the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report.<sup>4</sup> The poor status has resulted in poor governance in many ways. However, the close analysis reveals various other factors recognised for poor governance.

Good governance suggests government's interaction with the citizens. It is an application of transformative, administrative, political, social and economic authority to meet the necessities of law, transparency and accountability.<sup>5</sup> Governments have to respond to the demands of citizens to improve the efficiency of the public services.<sup>6</sup> In the past, studies have been undertaken covering different dimensions of good governance. Egwuonwu spoke on accountability, justice, transparency, integrity and performance. These are all behavioural aspects of governance.<sup>7</sup> Some others viewed good governance in the parameters of equity, efficiency, sustainability, transparency, accountability and security.<sup>8</sup>

The fundamental cause of poor governance in India is the low accountability of the law makers and the administrators. The central and state bureaucrats have huge responsibility but low ability to provide the essential services such as justice and security. Courts have huge pending cases, so they cannot provide justice on time. The police is politicized. Government authority is highly centralized. Transparency in government is lacking. To sum up, the poor governance is rooted in the administrative structure of the country.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The available and accessible literature was reviewed to understand the research problem deeply and extensively. The present review of literature contains the study done by various institutions and researchers on the issues such as good governance, accountability and transparency in public service delivery, use of communication technology in public services and comparative assessment of the parameters of governance.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has viewed good governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage the country's affairs. It involved the instruments, procedures and organisations through which, citizens and civil society organisations can express their interests and exercise their legal rights.<sup>9</sup>

A study has assessed the impact of various Transparency and Accountability Initiatives (TAIs) in settings such as Community Score Cards, Social Audits, E-governance, Citizen Report Cards, Citizen Charter, Complaints Mechanisms and Tracking Surveys. While on service delivery and quality, it was found that the TAIs had been effective in achieving their goals and impacted on improving the quality of public services in a range of cases.<sup>10</sup>

The United Nations considered "good" governance as an essential component of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), because 'good governance' establishes a framework for fighting poverty, inequality and other shortcomings.<sup>11</sup>

Many authors have explained the importance of people centred-governance. This is focused on the rationale, strategies, actors and consequences of people-centred governance. Many more dimensions of people-centred policy and administrative system are highlighted by the authors.<sup>12</sup> Suggestions on how to revamp the governance system in order to make it more people oriented and responsive to citizens' needs are offered in this study.

4. The Global Competitiveness Report 2017–2018 (2018), World Economic Forum, available at <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-competitiveness-report-2017-2018> (accessed on March 19, 2019).

5 UNESCAP (2012) what is Good Governance? United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, available at [www.unescap.org/huest/gg/governance.htm](http://www.unescap.org/huest/gg/governance.htm) (accessed on March 27, 2019).

6 Siddiquee, N. (2008). Service Delivery Innovations and Governance: The Malaysian Experience. *Transforming Government People, Process and Policy*, 2(3), 194-213.

7 Egwuonwu, R. (2011). Behavioural Governance, Accounting and Corporate Governance Quality. *Journal of Economics and International Finance*. 3(1), 1-12

8 Kefela, G. (2011). Good Governance Enhance the Efficiency and Effectiveness Public Spending-Sub Saharan countries. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(11), 3995-3999. [20].

9 UNDP (1997) Reconceptualizing Governance. New York: Management Development and Governance Division. Discussion paper 2. Retrieved from: <ftp://pogar.org/LocalUser/pogarp/other/undp/governance/reconceptualizing>

10 Joshi, A. (2010). Assessing the Impact of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives in Service Delivery. Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. Seminar Paper presented at the Hewlett Foundation in San Francisco.

11 De La Croix, D. & Delavallade, C. (2009). Growth, Public Investment and Corruption with Failing Institutions. *Economics of Governance*, 10,187–219.

12 Arora, Ramesh K. (2001). *People-Centred Governance*, Aalekh Publication, Jaipur.

K. Srinivasan and M.S. Selvan in a study<sup>13</sup> reviewed sources of data for computation of the indicators used in different studies related to governance. This review highlighted the dimension, indicators and data sources for improvement of governance at the Central and state level. The following inferences were drawn after reviewing the relevant literatures.

- a) The structure and functioning of governance in India have not been effective because lack of uniformity and innovation in the administration
- b) Corruption, weak accountability, overloaded judiciary, centralised governance are the bottlenecks in the administration.
- c) Lack of people participation in the administration is far from satisfaction.
- d) E-governance will ease out the problems of poor-administration

## STUDY OBJECTIVES

Viewing the above context, the following objectives of the study have been framed.

- a) To identify the major difficulties in the delivery of good governance and suggest measures to eradicate the same.
- b) To identify the state specific good governance measures which can be replicated in the entire country
- c) Analyse the efficiency of e-governance programmes undertaken by Gujarat state.

**Study Hypothesis:** Good governance is a powerful tool to ensure the socio-economic development of the people. E-governance a part of governance process builds trust and relationship between the government and citizens. Good governance pays electoral dividends.

**Research Methodology:** The present study is exploratory in nature and hence the researcher looks forward to arrive at the findings based on the research methodology with the thrust on secondary information collected from the published documents and government reports.

**Study Scope:** Keeping in mind the objectives and hypothesis of the study, the study covers the barriers of good governance and e-governance practices undertaken by the central and state governments.

**Research Question:** The government at all levels are striving to provide good governance to the citizens. However, many are unsure of the role of the technology in the case of good governance. In view of the problem, the author desires to ask how e-governance has played key role in citizen friendly services.

**Limitations of the Study:** Many state governments are claiming that the e-governance practices are user friendly and implemented effectively. However, the same could not be verified with the citizen or end users. The physical verification of the initiatives would have altered the conclusions of the study. In the Indian situation the barriers to good governance are innumerable. However, in order to achieve the research objectives some of the barriers are described below.

## CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC LIFE

Corruption is widespread in India. Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) reported India is ranked 94<sup>th</sup> out of 176 countries.<sup>1</sup> Corruption has taken the role of universal aspect of Indian politics and bureaucracy. In the last five decades corruption was rampant in Indian bureaucratic and political system. Thus corruption is accepted as a way of life for citizens. It has become a damning aspect of governance and major hurdle to economic growth and good governance. The benefits intended for the beneficiaries were pilfered in the process of delivery. Thus the present government commenced the cash transfer benefits to stop the leakage during delivery. Research has established that in the long run corruption reduces the economic growth and lowers investment. Corruption is an intractable problem in India. It is like diabetes disease which can be controlled, but not eliminated.

## WEAK POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The behaviour of Indian law makers both at the Centre and the state is far from satisfaction. Every act of legislator is motivated by a personal gain. Legislators' corruption activities are reflected in the floor testing, election campaign, asking questions in the house, enacting laws for protecting interest of big corporate houses. Many lawmakers in India have criminal records. Thus, electoral reforms are urgently needed to prevent criminals enter into parliament or state assemblies. Politicians are able to win elections through patronage. Thus political scientists call India as a 'clientele state'. Elections are expensive and require significant resources

<sup>13</sup> K. Srinivasan and M.S. Selvan. (2015). Governance and Development in India: A Review of Studies and Suggestions for Further Research, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Working Paper No. 219, Chennai

to win the elections. However, in recent years, the corruption in electoral politics has significantly reduced due to the efforts of judiciary.

### WEAK ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

In the Indian parliamentary system, the responsibility of policy execution lies with the bureaucracy. But the performance of the Indian bureaucracy is much to be desired. The corruption in India flourishes on red tape, complicated official procedures and discretionary power of the officials. Governance in India is characterized by lack of transparency in rules. Further, there is no accountability for performance in the civil service. At the behest of political executive, bureaucrats are frequently transferred depriving them of gaining the expertise knowledge in any particular field. Modern economy demands specialized skills which can be obtained over the period of long years. There are around three million civil servants in the central government, including the railways and another seven million in the states<sup>1</sup>. As of 2010, the nation had 4,926 officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) against the authorised strength of 6396. Besides, huge clerical staffs and custodian employees are employed.<sup>14</sup> The problem of plenty is delaying the administrative work.

The task of accountability in the civil service is impossible by the excessive job protection of civil servants. Article 311 of the Constitution of India intended to safeguard the government employees against the arbitrary action by the legislature. Such legal protection to government employees deters action against the erring officials. Constitutional over protection for civil servants is an unusual feature of the civil service. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) has recommended measures for civil service reforms.<sup>15</sup>

### HIGH PENDENCY OF CASES IN COURTS

India boasts of a strong independent judiciary. The problem of judiciary is high pending of cases in courts at all levels. Former Chief Justice of India Shri Dipak Misra cautioned on rising pendency of cases with the backlog touching 3.3 crore cases. As on April 2018, 2.84 crore cases were pending in the subordinate courts, 43 lakh in the High Courts and 57,987 in the Supreme Court (SC). The five states such as are Uttar Pradesh (61.58 lakh), Maharashtra (33.22 lakh), West Bengal (17.59 lakh), Bihar (16.58 lakh) and Gujarat (16.45 lakh) have high pendency of cases.<sup>16</sup>

The UN norm stipulates that appointment of fifty judges per million population but India has meagre ten judges per a million population.<sup>17</sup> The reasons for delay in settlement of cases include absconding of the under trials, stay order by the High Court on subordinate court judgements, frequent adjournments, cumbersome legal procedures etc. Secondly, large level vacancies in the judiciary and delay in the appointment of judges are further augmenting the problem. The recent conflicts between the executive and judiciary over the judges' appointment further prolonging the difficulties. Any strategy for judicial reforms must address the mounting arrear of cases, lengthy legal procedures, high vacancy in judiciary and poor accountability of the judges. In this context, digitisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) assures speedy justice. Much legal work requires sifting documents, researching old judgments and searching for the irregularities. There is a practice in the United States, both defence and prosecution side will submit the witness and evidences in the civil cases before trial begins. This is called the discovery process in the legal trials. Once all the facts and evidences are placed; AI will determine the verdict in the case. Similar process should be adopted in the Indian judiciary to address the issue of high pendency of cases. While on Gujarat, after reduction of cases the state had nearly 18.21 lakh cases in courts by March 2019.<sup>18</sup> The reduction of cases was possible because of efficient functioning of Lok Adalat and setting up of special courts in the state. The centre had planned District Facilitation Centre (DFC) at each district court to be headed by Nyaya Mitra.

<sup>14</sup> UPSC: India faces shortage of IAS, IPS officers, India Today, available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/upsc-civil-services-india-faces-shortage-ias-ips-officers-967106-2017-03-23> (accessed on March 19, 2019)

<sup>15</sup> Second Administrative Commission Reports, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India, available at: <https://darpg.gov.in/arc-reports> (accessed on March 19, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> 3.3 crore cases pending in Indian courts, pendency figure at its highest: CJI Dipak Misra Business Today, available at <https://www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/3-3-crore-cases-pending-indian-courts-pendency-figure-highest-cji-dipak-misra/story/279664.html> (accessed on April 13, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> S.A Aiyar. (2019). India needs more Jailed Crooks not More Watchmen, Times of India, Ahmedabad, March 24, 2019

<sup>18</sup> 18.21 lakh cases pending in Gujarat courts, Times of India, Ahmedabad August 19, 2019.

## POLITICIZED POLICE FORCE

The Indian Police force is organized on a federal pattern. Since law and order is a state subject, the state government exercises operational control over the police. The states have resisted the central government's efforts to undertake a federal investigation agency. Besides, the state police forces has many police organizations, which are operated by the Central government. Many have recommended professionalization and independence of police force from executive. Realising the difficulties in police force the Supreme Court has recommended reforms in the police administration.<sup>19</sup> The recommendations are as under.

- a) State government must constitute an independent State Security Commission to monitor the functioning of police forces.
- b) The police officers on operational duty must have minimum stay of two years in the place of posting.
- c) State government must set-up an administrative board to decide transfers, postings, promotions and other service matters for police officers.
- d) The investigation and law and order functions of the police must be separated.

## E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE: ALL INDIA SCENARIO

Democracy and citizenship are the two pillars of good governance. Thus citizens are demanding minimum government but maximum governance. Emphasising the good governance, the nation celebrates December 25<sup>th</sup> as the Good Governance Day. Various state governments have taken series of measures to provide good governance. Some of the measures are described below.

### E- Governance

State governments have used e-governance to improve the efficiency of services. Some of the states have good practices in e-governance initiatives. These initiatives include e-seva in Andhra Pradesh, Janmitra in Rajasthan, FRIENDS<sup>20</sup> in Kerala and CHOICE (Chhattisgarh Online information for Citizen Empowerment) in Chhattisgarh. Similarly, integrated citizen service centres SETU and Gyandoot in Maharashtra, APSWAN (Andhra Pradesh State Wide Area Network) and VOICE (Versatile Online Information for Citizen Empowerment) in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra are examples of e-governance. These initiatives provide services such as the computerisation of land records in Karnataka, case file movement monitoring of licenses and permits in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh. Similarly, e-governance in Uttar Pradesh has empowered citizens in line with the 'Digital India' Programme.<sup>21</sup> While Government of Gujarat had conducted 37 million e-transactions through 14,500 Common Service Centres and 300 Lokvani Centres by 2014.

### Citizen Charter

It reflects the commitment of the government towards its citizens regarding services, information, consultation, non-discrimination, accessibility and value for money. The banking sector in the implementation of the citizens' charter is a case in the point. Three banks Punjab National Bank, Punjab and Sind Bank and Oriental Bank of Commerce received hand-holding support from the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in the year 2000.<sup>22</sup> These banks worked on issues such as stakeholders involvement in the formulation of citizens' charters, deployment of the citizens' charters in the banks, creation of awareness about the charter among the customers of the banks, special training for employees about implementation of citizens' charter. The practice was abysmally low despite the good intention of the citizen charter. The low practice occurred due to absence of awareness by citizens, dearth of precision in setting service standards and want of commitment by the employees.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Seven Steps to Police Reforms, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, available at [http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/aj/police/india/initiatives/seven\\_steps\\_to\\_police\\_reform.pdf](http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/aj/police/india/initiatives/seven_steps_to_police_reform.pdf) (accessed on March 19, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> FRIENDS (Fast Reliable Instant Efficient Network for Disbursement of Services) is an outlet popularly known as Jan Seva Kendra provides single-window facility to citizens for government related transactions.

<sup>21</sup> Government of Uttar Pradesh: <http://gadgets.ndtv.com/internet/news/e-governance-in-uttar-pradesh-poised-for-big-leap-with-new-initiatives-699358> (Accessed on October 14, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> The Citizens' Charter: The Indian Experience, available at <https://goicharters.nic.in/ccinitiative.htm> (Accessed on March 5, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> Sud, Inder. (2010). "Good Governance for Modern Society; Combining Smarter Government, Decentralisation and Accountability to People", Harinder S. Kohli and Anil Sood (eds.), India 2039: An Affluent Society in One Generation, Sage, New Delhi.

### Citizen Report Cards

The Citizen Report Cards (CRC) are community based surveys that seek user feedback on the quality and performance of public services. This raises awareness and bring reforms in the public service delivery. CRC first originated in Bangalore to assess the low standards in the city's public services. The survey results showed very low ratings by all the major service providers.<sup>24</sup> Later on the exercise resulted in increase of social capital within the local community. These surveys were useful and citizen friendly. However, these surveys were not extended to other cities of India.

### Establishment of Lokpal and Lokayukta

The ombudsman body lokpal at the national level and lokayukta at the state aim to eradicate corruption in administration. Article 323 of the Constitution suggests establishment of an autonomous authority to investigate complaints against the corrupt officials. Many states are ignoring the institution of lokayukta who send occasional recommendations only to be ignored by the government. According to the Lokayukta Bill 2016, a committee headed by Chief Minister will select the members of lokayukta and the Governor will act on the recommendations of the committee. . The new bill gives power to the state government to exclude any 'public functionaries' from the jurisdiction of the lokayukta. As a best practice, the Karnataka government has entrusted the lokayukta with wide powers for investigation. The entire vigilance department has been placed under the executive control of the lokayukta. The Lokpal Act 2016 requires a public servant to declare his assets and liabilities.<sup>25</sup> Proper implementation of such provisions will check corruption at high places

In this situation, e-Governance has emerged as a powerful tool of good governance.<sup>26</sup> The national e-governance plan has the vision to make all the government services accessible to the common man. Adhering to the plans of national e-governance some of the state governments have launched use of IT services. The following is an attempt to discuss these measures in Gujarat.

### E-GOVERNANCE: GUJARAT SCENARIO

Good governance has been the primary motto of the Government of Gujarat. Gujarat is the leading Indian state in undertaking e-governance. In Gujarat, citizens enjoy electronic services in the areas of land records, utility services, bill payments, education, health, skill development, transport, industry and commerce, court and judiciary and finance management services and municipal services.<sup>27</sup> For all this, Government of Gujarat has bagged many national awards in e-governance during the last two decades. According to SKOTCH report 2019, in a nationwide study, Gujarat topped the e-governance ranking. Further, sixteen e-governance projects from Gujarat were selected for final assessment, of which, three had high impact terms of governance.<sup>28</sup>

### Gujarat's Approach: ICT in Governance

Gujarat has ushered multiple efforts to bring Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the governance. The IT policy of Gujarat improves the processes in the governance by using computing devices, communication systems and software to provide better delivery systems. This has brought both the government and the people closure through the means of electronic systems. All the facilities are provided by a single portal for all the e-governance services. The services are flashed in Gujarati language to make it more suitable for the service users. The state government has undertaken following initiatives of e-governance.

**E-Gujarat State Portal:** It acts as a single window access point to avail the government services through internet. Various e-services offered through the portal include information availability, submission of

<sup>24</sup> Citizens' Report Cards on Public Services, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPowerment/Resources/14832\\_Bangalore-web.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPowerment/Resources/14832_Bangalore-web.pdf) (Accessed on March 11, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> PRS Legislative Research, <https://www.prsindia.org/billtrack/the-lokpal-and-lokayuktas-bill-2016-4354/> (Accessed on March 1, 2019)

<sup>26</sup> Anveer A.Zargar and Mansoor A. Sheikh, "Good Governance in India: Challenges and Prospects" ISOR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, Volume 23, Issue2, Ver. 2 (February) PP 60-64 e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-084

<sup>27</sup> Anandi Marg (2016), Journey of Inclusive Growth, Gujarat Marching Ahead, Ameya Inspiring Books, Ahmedabad.

<sup>28</sup> Gujarat tops SKOCH State of Governance 2019, available at <https://inclusion.skoch.in/story/1060/gujarat-tops-skoch-state-of-governance-2019-1360.html> (accessed on March 28, 2019)

application forms, electronic payment, file status tracking, complaint redresses and availability of digital copies of certificates and licenses. It reduced service delivery time by simplification of processes and delivered of e-certificates for services.

Gujarat State Wide Area Network (GSWAN) is a communication infrastructure and now-a-days extensively used for exchange of Data, audio and video information between two or more locations,. GSWAN helped in intra-governmental communication setup to improve the administrative efficiency and accountability in government functioning. GSWAN has used ICT to provide effective e-governance in the state.

**Common Service Centres (CSC):** These centres are the delivery points for delivery of various public and private services to rural citizens of Gujarat. The basis objective of CSC was to undertake a rapid social and economic progress in rural areas by integrating the goals of profit-making and social services. These centres provided access to quality education, skill development to rural citizens, quality healthcare, rural empowerment and empowerment of citizens. By the end of 2019, the State Government had established over 15,000 CSC, roughly one centre for every 4000 population.

**Empowerment of Civil Servants:** Gujarat has taken the initiative of instilling the notion of public servants (Jan Sevak) among the government employees. Chintan Shibir (Camps for deliberation) is organised every year inviting Chief Minister, Ministers, volunteers to the government, department heads, District Collectors (DC) and District Development Officer's (DDO) to discuss the challenges of governance, share the best practices and generate ideas to improve governance. Again, civil servants were given extra freedom to take initiatives such as swayam sukhayai<sup>29</sup> which allows the District Collector and District Development Officers to implement any project of their choice without adhering to the guidelines of the state.

**Open Government:** Government of Gujarat had promoted open and transparent government. Many times departmental secretaries present the annual work plan and invite suggestions from other departments in inter-departmental meetings. The information centre BISAG (Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics) implements map-based geo spatial information systems. BISAG provides information on land, water and other resources in the state.

**Citizen Centred Services:** The services are provided through an extensive network of Jan Seva Kendra (public service centre) in all districts of Gujarat with single window service for public services. Many services are provided in the same day. Computerization of all 14,000 gram panchayats has facilitated instant processing of birth and death registration and issuance of certificates for certain services. All the land records has been digitised and citizens accessed it through the e-Dhara project. Gujarat Informatics Limited enabling e-governance in the state.

**SWAGAT:** SWAGAT (State Wide Attention on Grievances by Application of Technology), an IT based initiative of governance in Gujarat, was set up in Gujarat to deal with the grievances of citizens. This concept had enabled direct communication between the citizen and the Chief Minister of the state. Later this programme was extended to the rural area providing the benefit of talking to the Chief Minister and finding quicker solution to the problems.

**E-Vishwagram Projects:** Gujarat government has launched e-gram vishwagram project connecting to all Gram Panchayats and 6000 Citizens Common Service Centres.<sup>30</sup> The project delivers services such as government to community and business to community services through entrepreneurship mode. Government of Gujarat introduced Sachivalaya Integrated Communication Network (SICN) to provide safe voice communication services to all the government offices, boards and corporations in the state capital, Gandhinagar. All the instances cited above argue that e-governance in Gujarat has emerged as a powerful tool for any citizen centric and effective governance system. But it has not reached to all corners of the state and full use of the facilities up to its potential is yet to happen.

### State Performance on Governance

The Public Affairs Centre, is a not-for-profit research organisation, works on improving the quality of governance in India. Public Affairs Centre has ranked various states on the basis of the Public Affairs Index

<sup>29</sup> Swayam sukhaya means happiness to oneself. This initiative aimed at creating space for innovative practices amongst the state government officers.

<sup>30</sup> E-Gram Viswagram Project: At a Glance, available at [https://panchayat.gujarat.gov.in/panchayatvibhag/Images/eGram\\_report\\_June\\_2016NM.pdf](https://panchayat.gujarat.gov.in/panchayatvibhag/Images/eGram_report_June_2016NM.pdf). (viewed on April 6, 2019)

computed on ten parameters. However, only seven important parameters discussed in the present paper. The parameters included human development, law and order situation and basic infrastructure etc. The below matrix shows performance of states in the terms of governance. Due to space constraints only the bigger states were included for the analysis and smaller states excluded.

**Table 1: Ranking of States on Parameters of Governance**  
(In percentage)

Rank of States	Human Development	Social Protection	Law and Order Situation Delivery of Justice	Environment Management	Transparency and Accountability	Fiscal Management	Economic Freedom
1	Kerala (.692)	Karnataka (.665)	Tamil Nadu (.724)	Tamil Nadu (.682)	Kerala (.757)	Uttar Pradesh (.494)	Gujarat (.890)
2	Punjab (.637)	West Bengal (.650)	Gujarat (.670)	Karnataka (.625)	Karnataka (.714)	Assam (.490)	Maharashtra (.610)
3	Karnataka (.580)	Kerala (.636)	Kerala (.658)	West Bengal (.529)	Chhattisgarh (.694)	Jharkhand (.483)	Andhra Pradesh (.532)
4	Tamil Nadu (.551)	Madhya Pradesh (.603)	Punjab (.650)	Gujarat (.497)	Punjab (.663)	Bihar (.473)	Tamil Nadu (.443)
5	Andhra Pradesh (.549)	Rajasthan (.592)	West Bengal (.641)	Maharashtra (.484)	Assam (.648)	Odisha (.469)	Rajasthan (.436)
6	Haryana (.548)	Tamil Nadu (.589)	Maharashtra (.622)	Kerala (.482)	Haryana (.627)	Chhattisgarh (.455)	Madhya Pradesh (.384)
7	Maharashtra (.510)	Uttar Pradesh (.575)	Andhra Pradesh (.603)	Odisha (.481)	Maharashtra (.609)	Punjab (.454)	Uttar Pradesh (.375)
8	Odisha (.439)	Assam (.543)	Karnataka (.597)	Andhra Pradesh (.475)	Uttar Pradesh (.604)	Madhya Pradesh (.540)	Punjab (.366)
9	Rajasthan (.439)	Maharashtra (.521)	Chhattisgarh (.554)	Assam (.473)	Jharkhand (.602)	Rajasthan (.433)	Karnataka (.358)
10	Gujarat (.431)	Chhattisgarh (.591)	Bihar (.537)	Punjab (.472)	West Bengal (.584)	Karnataka (.427)	Haryana (.345)
11	West Bengal (.420)	Odisha (.516)	Rajasthan (.536)	Rajasthan (.436)	Madhya Pradesh (.571)	Tamil Nadu (.426)	Chhattisgarh (.345)
12	Assam (.415)	Gujarat (.432)	Odisha (.510)	Madhya Pradesh (.433)	Bihar (.513)	West Bengal (.425)	West Bengal (.337)
13	Chhattisgarh (.391)	Punjab (.400)	Assam (.510)	Haryana (.416)	Rajasthan (.479)	Karnataka (.425)	Odisha (.331)
14	Jharkhand (.288)	Andhra Pradesh (.389)	Madhya Pradesh (.499)	Uttar Pradesh (.397)	Gujarat (.469)	Gujarat (.421)	Jharkhand (.328)
15	Uttar Pradesh (.284)	Jharkhand (.385)	Jharkhand (.495)	Bihar (.391)	Andhra Pradesh (.445)	Haryana (.410)	Kerala (.252)
16	Madhya Pradesh (.266)	Haryana (.350)	Uttar Pradesh (.441)	Chhattisgarh (.356)	Odisha (.442)	Maharashtra (.393)	Assam (.125)
17	Bihar (.220)	Bihar (.303)	Haryana (.406)	Jharkhand (.343)	Tamil Nadu (.312)	Andhra Pradesh	Bihar (.121)



							(.331)	
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Source: Public Affairs Index Measuring Governance available at <http://www.pai.pacindia.org/#/2017/public-affairs-index> (accessed on June 12, 2018)

Note: The figure within the parenthesis indicates the performance of the states.

An analysis of the matrix reveals Gujarat shows the best performance in the parameters of economic freedom, law and order situation, delivery of justice and environment management. But the performance drops down in the case of social protection, transparency and accountability. Prominently, the rank of Gujarat (.431) is worse than the relatively backward states Odisha and Rajasthan (.439) in the parameters of overall human development. This is really worrisome. Gujarat has to focus more on social sector development and fiscal management to climb the ladder of overall human development. On the positive side, Gujarat (.890) has given maximum economic freedom to its citizens compared to economically prosperous states Maharashtra (.610).

### GUJARAT SITUATION IN SKOCH 2019 RANKING

Many noticeable changes are marked while comparing the findings of SKOCH good governance ranking of 2019 with the same of Public Affairs Index. Health and hygiene dominated the good governance initiatives across the country in 2019. The states that performed better in health care delivery and sanitation topped in the SKOCH ranking.<sup>31</sup> E-governance was also major focus area among many states. Owing to the best performance in health and education, energy and e-governance segment Gujarat bagged top spot in the SKOCH state of governance ranking. Moreover 104 projects from Gujarat were shortlisted for measuring the high impacts.<sup>32</sup> Gujarat gained number one position in eight sector rankings. The sectors included health, energy, education, e-governance, transport, tourism, infrastructure and governance. Sixteen e-governance projects from Gujarat had high impacts according to SKOCH ranking. Gujarat launched technology enabled community health system to improve the coverage and quality of health services. Gujarat has a dedicated e-auction portal, which no other states have. All these ensured top position for Gujarat in the governance ranking of SKOCH 2019.

### THE WAY AHEAD

Governance in India is affected by multifarious factors such as corruption, weak political and administrative accountability, overburdened judiciary, politicised police force and centralised governance. In order to tackle the deficiencies in administration, the state governments have introduced various projects such as citizen's charter, citizen's report cards and set up institutions of lokpal and lokayukta. These barriers of good governance can be addressed by effective legislative measures. Despite all positive measures the economic progress and the governance of the state is yet to be citizen friendly. Thus an inclusive policy framework with citizen at the centre needs to be developed. Apart from improving public access to information the management information system needs to be expanded to cover more public delivery agencies.<sup>33</sup> State governments must strengthen intuitional mechanisms for prevention and detection of corruption. E-office may be expedited in all departments of centre and states to prevent corruption. The information technology tools must be expanded for single window clearance and stakeholder consultation in policy formulation. The successful e-governance by some of the states must be replicated in every state. Good governance should entail the process, decisions and outcomes that sustain the natural resources alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life.

Gujarat has ranked among the top five economically prosperous states. However, the social development indicators for Gujarat are still lagging behind. Gujarat's performance in health and education is far from satisfaction despite its economic growth.<sup>34</sup> Gujarat is usually perceived as a good governed state. It has taken the series of measures to incorporate ICT in governance. Some of the measures included e-Gujarat, citizen service centres, empowerment of civil servants and e-projects. However, the projects are yet to deliver its best performance because the service seekers are computer illiterate or semi-literate. Though the Vibrant Gujarat Summit<sup>35</sup> has ensured implementation of many infrastructure projects, the use of technology in public administration is yet to be optimum.

<sup>31</sup> SKOCH State of Governance Ranking 2019, available at <https://inclusion.skoch.in/story/1057/skoch-state-of-governance-2019-1357.html> (accessed on May 11, 2020)

<sup>32</sup> ibid

<sup>33</sup> Government of India, Report of NITI Aayog, Strategy for New India at 75, New Delhi, (November 2018).

<sup>34</sup> Himani Baxi, "Social Expenditure and Human Development in Gujarat" Economic & Political Weekly, April 6, 2019 Vol. LIV no 14, pp 58-64

<sup>35</sup> Every alternate year, Government of Gujarat organises an investors' summit to bring together businessmen, investors, thought leaders and policy makers. Government explores business opportunities in Gujarat through this summit.

Gujarat has shown excellent performance in Health, Education, Power, Transport and e-Governance segments according to report of SKOCH State of Governance 2019. However the state is lagging behind in municipal governance, skill development, women and child development, sanitation and safety of citizens.<sup>36</sup> For a comprehensive perspective, the development indicators ought to be developed at the state, Centre, panchayat and nagarpalika level.

The use of computer technology, internet facilities and mobile phones have augmented the developmental aspirations of the people. Technology may cut across the structural barriers of governance such as region, religion and caste and will assist in governance. People's perception does matter in good governance. There should be statistical techniques for converting the perception data of the people on different dimensions of governance into hard data.

Experts view that there are two divergent paths of development in the states. Some state governments play enabling roles, provide good infrastructure and efficient administrative processes for development. The developed states namely Tamil Nadu play enabling role combined with social service delivery. Contrarily, less-developed states like Bihar government plays the dominant role in development since the presence of private enterprise in the state is negligible. Gujarat government needs to drive both public investment-led growth and social development as well. However, in both the cases good governance plays a dominant role in ushering the development. Thus, states have to prioritise good governance by encouraging the roles of public and private enterprises.

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<sup>36</sup> Gujarat tops SKOCH State of Governance 2019 available at <https://inclusion.skoch.in/story/1060/gujarat-tops-skoch-state-of-governance-2019-1360.html> (accessed on March 28, 2019)