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Evaluating e-governance Initiatives through Citizen Feedback

Ramesh Ramnathan
Suresh Balakrishnan

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Evaluating e-Governance Initiatives
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The phrase "Information Technology" (IT) is often associated with the phrase "better, faster, cheaper". The idea that IT can be an enabling force, not only for business and trade but also for government, has now been widely accepted. When applied to the Government or Public Services in India, IT seems to have had no remarkable effect on the manner in which citizens benefit from the services of the government, with the exception of the Railways Reservation System. Against this backdrop, the efforts of the State Government of Andhra Pradesh to harness Information Technology seem like a major initiative to deliver an improved administration.

The potential impacts of an improved administrative machinery through the use of Information Technology are enormous: improved efficiency of public service dispensation, reduced transaction costs, increased transparency and thereby accountability of the government, and most importantly, sustainable change. Given the potential of what was being attempted, Public Affairs Centre (PAC) felt that a careful study of the situation in Andhra Pradesh would yield rich insights on whether and how computerisation had affected the life of the common person.

PAC adopted its standard user-feedback approach in assessing this issue: a survey in 1999 of the citizens who have actually used those particular services that have been IT-enabled. This survey was supplemented with fieldwork, to gain insights into the changes in functioning of the specific departments, and the process by which computerisation was implemented.

The surveys addressed users of two major government departments where IT was introduced at the user interface:
a. Computer Aided Registration Department (CARD), and

For CARD, the interviews were conducted in the CARD offices, while the CTO respondents were interviewed at a location of convenience based on a request for appointment. The surveys were carried out with samples in urban and rural areas. Control Groups were identified for each of the services; for CARD, the control group was from Andhra Pradesh itself, while for Commercial Tax, the control group was from Karnataka, since all Commercial Tax operations had been computerised in AP. A third survey was also contemplated at the time of design. This was on the Mandal Revenue Offices who provide Multi Purpose Household Certificates; this survey was not completed, for reasons described later. However, we have included a discussion of this service as well, because it offers interesting insights.

**Feedback on Services offered by CARD**

The survey sought to generate information on:

- Dimensions of service delivery such as time taken, steps involved, number of officials involved, etc. in getting the job done
- Facilities available at the Registration Office
- Quality of behaviour of officials
- Level of satisfaction with services
- Comparison with previous visits, prior to computerisation

Level of Overall Satisfaction, the most important indicator of impact, suggests that CARD is a major success. While 47% of respondents indicated extremely high level of satisfaction, 46% of the respondents said that they were somewhat satisfied (only 7% indicated some form of dissatisfaction). In addition, 82% of
those respondents who had visited the Registration Office prior to computerisation reported that they now had a better experience after CARD. Among respondents from the control group, just 28% indicated an extremely high level of overall satisfaction.

Faster service to the citizens was a prime objective of CARD. Survey results indicate that the average time taken to get the job done was 1.5 days. This compares very well with the time taken in a non-computerised office - of 3.8 days, which is more than twice the time taken at CARD offices.

Staff behaviour and interaction with users seem to be significantly good with CARD. Over 30% of the respondents were "extremely satisfied" with the quality of their interaction with the officials (politeness/helpfulness etc.), in the CARD office. This was substantially better than satisfaction expressed with behaviour in non-computerised offices.

The procedure of applying for CARD services does not seem to be complicated or time consuming for most users - over 90% found it to be of convenient length, and easy to understand. Approximately 15 minutes were spent in submitting the form to the CARD officials. Despite this, only 56% of the respondents filled the form themselves. While 70% of the respondents knew the process that they had to follow, 30% did not have access to instruction sheets or "help desk" or "inquiry counter" from which they could get some assistance.

Customer responsiveness is a separate dimension that could do with improvement. While 16% neither received an acknowledgement for the application nor were informed about when next to visit the office, 23% were not told how many visits would be needed to complete the task. However, this had little bearing on the overall level of satisfaction, and is probably
indicative of the low level of expectations when dealing with the government.

Levels of satisfaction are not driven solely by the speed or ease of service, but also by availability of traditional amenities. The survey found availability of amenities such as toilets, shade/covered area for waiting, seating space, drinking water, and an information/help desk to be unevenly distributed across the centres. For example, about a third of the centres had toilets; some of the larger towns did not have access to drinking water; seating space was almost ubiquitously available. The presence of these amenities seems quite critical to the overall level of satisfaction. People who reported that CARD office had these facilities also reported higher levels of satisfaction than those who observed that the CARD office did not have these amenities. This corroborates perceptions at non-computerised offices, where availability of amenities as well as satisfaction levels are lower.

Feedback on CTO Services

Since the CT department dealt with firms and not individuals, the process followed here was slightly different, and the sample size also somewhat smaller than that for the CARD survey. Care was taken to ensure that adequate representation was given to a range of commercial establishments, from corporate houses and industrial establishments to small shops in markets. The annual sales of these establishments ranged from less than Rs 1 crore (55% of the companies surveyed) to over 5 crores (17.5% of the companies). The control group, as mentioned earlier, consisted of 10 corporate houses in Bangalore, which interacted with a non-computerised CTO.

The themes covered in the CT survey were similar to that for the CARD survey:
• Dimensions of service delivery such as time taken, steps involved, number of officials involved, etc. in getting the job done:
• Facilities available at the Registration Office
• Quality of behaviour of officials
• Level of satisfaction with services
• Comparison with previous visits, prior to computerisation

Once again, the most important indicator of impact - Level of Overall Satisfaction - suggests that computerised CTO is a major success. While 43% indicated extremely high level of satisfaction, another 32% of the respondents said that they were somewhat satisfied (only 15% indicated some form of dissatisfaction). This compares well with 40% of the sample which expressed dissatisfaction at non-computerised offices.

Very few of the respondents said that they used a predefined application form in their interactions with the CTO: a majority submitted a letter detailing what they wanted. The time taken to submit the application was 17 minutes on average. However, there was a lot of variation in the time taken between centres, indicating that standard procedures are not being adopted across centres; for example, Maharajganj had an average time of 37 minutes, while SD Road had an average time of only 7 minutes to receive applications.

Most respondents were given a formal acknowledgement of the receipt of the application or letter. However, there is some inconsistency in informing the applicant on whether the application formalities were completed or not. 35% of the respondents were not informed thus, and this issue was most prevalent in one particular location - GD Metla, where 80% of the respondents claimed that they were not given full information on this issue. On another set of issues - timing of
next visit, or total number of visits required - the respondents said that they were not clearly informed. 90% of the respondents said that they could get their job done within a day. A large majority (65%) of the visitors had to meet more than one official at the CTO, and had to wait for an average time of 20 minutes to meet such additional officials.

Learning from the study

More than the statistics, insights abound from this study. In conversations with various officers who have individually and collectively been responsible for putting together what is now called the IT-vision of the AP Government, it is clear that there was no one grand IT plan, no previously articulated vision that the administration then went about executing. This is in fact heartening, since rarely does good work follow a grand design; rather, it is a series of small steps - some accidental, with the people at the helm having the capacity to separate the mistakes from the right moves.

Among the critical lessons that the key members of the IT-enabling administration have learned is the importance of developing constituencies outside the political/administrative system, i.e. with the citizens themselves. By doing this effectively, the administration can accomplish several goals:

- get the citizens on board, and ensure that the move to introduce computerisation does not get wed to the political fortunes of the party in power
- create an iterative computerisation process that accesses successive layers of the government starting with the outside and working in
- cut internal bottlenecks that can effectively thwart the best of intentions.

The last is a critical issue, and one that has adversely affected
aggressive moves on the IT front. A case in point is the withdrawal of the agreement with a Singapore-based consulting company to provide a service dubbed APVAN to simplify the government’s interface with the citizenry. It led to a huge protest organised by the state government unions about impending large-scale job-shedding.

Behind these IT-enabled citizen services is an attempt to connect all the district HQs and the State Government’s offices in Hyderabad through APSWAN (AP State Wide Area Network). This large chunk of the IT infrastructure that is behind the scenes in fact has much greater purpose than the mere provision of services to the user. CARD for example has a comprehensive database on properties in the area covered by each registration office, with associated market values. This has use in the future to be related with the city corporation’s or municipality’s property ownership records, and to streamline tax collections. The potential to avoid duplication of data within the administration, the capacity to add-on Management Information Systems to analyse and use the wealth of information that is being collected are significant benefits that these services can facilitate. However, this requires a far greater degree of IT-proliferation within the administration than currently exists, as well as time to build those external constituencies.

Another interesting insight is how the administration has secured the support of the staff at the lower rungs of the hierarchy in collecting the data, and in using the systems to deliver the services. This is especially important, since computerisation efforts in many other states, at a departmental level, are replete with instances of old PCs gathering dust. As in most situations, there is no silver bullet to unlock this riddle. In the case of the two services that we surveyed, we found a combination of factors

• There has been no fear of layoffs - in CARD for example,
there is staff excess after computerisation, but these people are being deployed as customer service agents to man kiosks at the CARD Offices

- Training on the new systems was given to all levels of employees, and those among them who demonstrated greater aptitude were given special training to become department-level trouble-shooters. This not only created a sense of accomplishment and ownership among the staff for the systems, but also shortened the response time to address any problems.

- The introduction of computerisation has not seemingly taken away the capacity to extract bribes - this, while it may seem unfortunate to many readers and observers, is a good lesson to learn: that increased efficiency cannot be accomplished simultaneously with reduced corruption. In fact, in all likelihood, these are not concurrent outcomes but sequential ones where the customer, after experiencing a higher level of service efficiency, begins to demand these services as a matter of course rather than paying extra for them.

**Challenges ahead**

The real challenge in terms of IT-enablement is the Multi-Purpose Household Survey (MPHS), a comprehensive database of the residents of AP. The size and scale of MPHS dwarfs all the earlier computerisation exercises and builds on the old voter identity card project. This project is right now suffering implementation delays. The AP government decided to use the data that had been collected earlier, and put the comprehensive state-wide database of the residents on an operational IT backbone. The implications of such an effort are wide-ranging, which begin with substantially easing delivery of basic services to the people, especially in the rural areas. For example, with the MPHS in place, a villager can get his nativity certificate
within 5 minutes, rather than put in an application and have an officer from the Mandal Revenue Office visit the village to establish the residence veracity of the villager. When one considers the fact that most applications for nativity - for example - are made during the beginning of the school year, and cause a logistical bottleneck for the MRO, the ability to save time has a ripple effect on the entire system. The nativity certificate is only one example of better, faster, quicker: there will be one common certificate that includes caste, nativity etc. instead of separate applications for each. In addition, birth and death certificates have also been made easier. Soon, a whole host of other features will be added. The larger ramifications of the MPHS project are to monitor civil supplies since accurate information on village population etc. will now be available at every level of the state administrative hierarchy, and MIS systems can allow for easy cross-tabulation.

While the idea of MPHS seems laudable, implementing it has proven to be a tough task for the administration for several reasons:

- The Collectors have already got their hands full with their existing responsibilities, without having to worry about another computerisation idea
- The Revenue Department is the oldest and probably most inertia-filled department of any state government system
- The logistics of the operation on a state-wide scale are quite daunting: 1200 Mandal Revenue offices spread over the state to be equipped with hardware, back up systems, training for the personnel etc.
- Other concerns also exist: security of the data. While CARD has taken adequate precautions to safeguard against data tampering - and in fact has retained an external agency to conduct a study and propose changes- MPHS is a service that seems quite porous.
Quite evidently, the state administration has a lot to do before MPHS can be chalked up as a successful IT-enabled citizen service.

What must be admired in the overall effort is the State Chief Minister’s essential contribution. By functioning like a political entrepreneur, he allows the administration to experiment with IT. CARD is a perfect example, where the administrator demonstrated something successful, which the Chief Minister scaled up quickly and systematically.

While the publicity generated by the IT-imagery is at some distance from the ground reality achieved, it has put enormous pressure on his administration to deliver against seemingly impossible odds, by deliberately creating high public expectations. It is an implicit recognition that maintaining the right pace for the IT revolution is crucial. If the pace were too slow, it would be captured by the inherent inertia of the administrative machinery, creating a public whiplash in the opposite direction with IT being seen as elitist, urban, ineffective and unnecessary. On the contrary, making the process too fast would make it seen as a Trojan horse by the bureaucracy.

The common thread through CARD and CTO is more than computerising citizen services or increased efficiency of public administration. It is the power of IT: how a set of wires hanging loosely from the tiled roof of a dusty Mandal Revenue Office can radically transform the face of government. In this new world, there is little need for flashy new cubicles, or aluminium cased windows, or corner offices. Rather, the movement is amoeboid, devoid of centralised planning, sustaining itself parasitically through the energies of the people who use the system and services. This is probably why it will succeed, why the IT-led changes in governance will last beyond the specific enlightened officer who traverses occasionally through
the swamps of public administration. Up until the interconnected, Internet-enabled world came into being, efficiency only lasted as long as the particular official could organise his domain, and discipline his staff to function with a sense of purpose. Once he or she left, it was difficult to maintain the level of services, let alone improve upon it. With IT, there is hope for sustainable change.

The AP government’s exercises indicate that the vision of this work need not be one where public administration needs to be revamped from the inside out completely before such changes can be seen. Rather, it is most suited to succeed within the confines of government because it needs such little externally visible accoutrements: the MRO can remain the same ramshackle building, with the exception of a computer and printer in the hands of the assistant, who prints out the birth certificate, and - for now, at least - collects his ten rupees mamool (bribe) from the villager, but at least delivers the service with minimal time delay.
SECTION I
Introduction And Survey Parameters

The State Government of Andhra Pradesh has introduced a series of Information Technology based interventions to improve the performance of select departments. The foundation of this effort was in the attempt to connect all district Headquarters and the State Government’s offices in Hyderabad through APSWAN (AP State Wide Area Network).

This IT infrastructure being set up is not for mere administrative control; a major part of it is going in to improve service delivery. This effort is based on a vision and strategy that envisages IT to be not just a tool for monitoring and directing the administration, but also to play a key role in simplifying and improving the interface of the Administration with citizens. While there has been extensive discussions on the scope of introducing IT and the projected benefits, the two major departments with large citizen interface where IT has been actually introduced are:

a. Registrars offices  
b. Commercial Taxes  

The third department where this process is in progress, is the Mandal Revenue Offices.

The following document is a report on a research study carried out by PAC in Andhra Pradesh. The aim of the exercise is to assess the impact of the recent computerization initiatives taken by the government of Andhra Pradesh to improve the quality of the services provided by the government to the citizens and business establishments in AP.
Research Objectives

The study attempted:
1. To assess the satisfaction of the citizens and business establishments of AP with the recent computerization initiatives taken by the government
2. To identify the areas that warrant attention
3. To identify and uncover any patterns in terms of the quality of service delivered by government agencies in different locations.

Scope

The AP government has computerized several of their offices where the government and the citizens have an interface. Essentially, these can be grouped as:

1. **Registration offices** - Computerization of registration offices to speed up the process of getting a citizen's property registered, providing market value assistance, encumbrance certificates etc. An area where there is a lot of citizen - Government interface.

2. **Computerization of Commercial Tax Office** - Computerization of commercial tax offices to facilitate the easy processing of handle tax settlements, litigations, file tax returns etc. - interface between Government agencies (Commercial Tax Office) and business establishments.

3. **Multipurpose Household Survey (MPHS)** - Using the MPHS data to computerize Mandal Revenue Offices to facilitate speedy issuance of caste, birth, death certificates etc.

Methodology

The field survey was carried out with the support of Gallup MBA India Pvt. Ltd., a leading market research agency which has worked with PAC on similar studies in the past.
The interviews for the CARD and MPHS were carried out in the respective office premises. The addresses of the Commercial Taxpayers were given to Gallup. Gallup investigators met the taxpayers after fixing up prior appointments with them. The interviews were carried out at a place of the respondents’ convenience.

Information was collected using a structured questionnaire for each survey. In addition, control groups were identified for each of the surveys. For CARD, these were Registration offices in Andhra Pradesh, which had not been computerised. For Commercial Taxes, such control groups were not found in AP since all CT offices had been computerised; hence, the control group was identified in Bangalore, Karnataka.
SECTION II
Feedback on CARD

The Registration Department is a major entity in the development of modern state institutions. While this department provides statutory support for transactions and contracts, it also has an important bearing on tax collections and regulation of black money. Consequently, there was wide room for delay and deficiency of service from the perspective of citizens who needed to use the services of the Department. Given the vast scope and nebulous nature of the information the Department handles in a routine manner, the introduction of IT has been viewed as a means of substantially improving the performance of the Department.

Sample size and Coverage

Approximately, 10 citizens each were interviewed in each of the 15 CARD offices that were chosen to carry out the exercise. There was a mix of urban and rural centres where the exercise was carried out. In addition to this, a 'control' sample of 30 citizens were interviewed in non-computerized registration offices to measure the relative satisfaction of the citizens with the new initiatives.

The survey covered the following issues:
- Purpose of visit to the Registration office (the Registration office provided services like Market Value of property, Registration of Lands, Issuance of Stamp Paper etc.)
- Level of overall satisfaction
- Quality of interaction with officials
- Application-related activities:
  - Procedures
  - Time taken to submit the application
• Complexity of the application forms
• Post-application dealings
• Getting the job done:
  • Time taken
  • Ease of getting the job done
  • Number of visits
  • Number of officials met
• Facilities at the Registration Office:
  • Assistance
  • Amenities
• Hours of operation
• Comparison with previous visits, prior to computerisation (for the relevant sample)

**Purpose of visit**

The CARD office provides a variety of services to the citizens of the state. Over half the citizens (51%), visit the office to get their property registered. As many as 29% of the respondents visit the CARD office to get ‘encumbrance certificates’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of the visit</th>
<th>Citizens utilizing the service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Sample Size) = 141</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encumbrance certificate</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market value assistance</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamp paper</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Marriage certificate, Sale deed etc)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall Satisfaction

Forty six percent (46%) of the respondents said that they were somewhat satisfied with their experience and 47% said that they were extremely satisfied with their experience (a total of 93% who were satisfied or better). This result compares favourably with that of the Control Sample, especially when considering the proportion of “extremely satisfied” respondents (28%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of the visit</th>
<th>Respondents utilizing the service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computerized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sample Size) N =</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely satisfied</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat satisfied</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quality of Interactions

Over 30% of the respondents were “extremely satisfied” with the quality of their interaction with the officials in the CARD office. On a variety of fronts measuring this satisfaction (politeness/helpfulness etc.), this was at least 50% better than it was in the Control group of non-computerised offices. There might be some sense of pride that the CARD official have in their jobs, since the department has been highlighted for its achievements in being one of the first to be computerised successfully, and all the personnel have undergone extensive training. Their degree of job satisfaction is apparent to the visitor, as they all have experienced the old ways and are seeing the transformation in their jobs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of Interactions</th>
<th>% extremely satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computerized Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active in their work</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comparison with the previous visits**

Eighty two percent (82%) of those respondents who had visited the Registration Office prior to computerisation said that they had a better experience after CARD; the results were reasonably evenly distributed over the various centres where the surveys were done, indicating that the level of services has a consistency. This indicates that the CARD makeover of the Registration Department has resulted in significant improvement in the user interaction with the department. However, as high as 35% believe that the staff behavior has not changed over what it was earlier and 63% feel that it has improved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Sample (Computerized)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Figures in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of people who had visited CARD office before 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has deteriorated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has remained the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has improved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the ‘Control Sample’ around 80% of the citizens had visited the Registration office prior to ’98. Their current experience vis-à-vis their previous experience is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Sample (Non-Computerized)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Figures in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of people who had visited CARD office before 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has deteriorated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has remained the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has improved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There appears to be a significant contrast between control sample and the experimental sample on their current experiences with the CARD office. While a sizeable proportion of citizens in the experimental (Computerized) felt that see an improvement in the CARD office, less than half of those believe so in the control group.

**Time to get the job completed**

One of the prime objectives of CARD was to provide faster service to the citizens. On this front, the survey results indicate that the average time taken to get the job done was 1.5 days. This compares with the time taken for a non-computerised office of 3.8 days, more than twice the time taken for the CARD offices.

In addition to the time taken, there are other aspects to getting the job done: ease of transaction, number of visits and officials met etc. In terms of information that the citizen possessed on
whom to contact in case of delays of difficulty, 22% of the respondents did not have such information. This statistic was skewed negatively by 3 centres where such information lapses were high. In the case of number of officials met, over 60% of respondents had to meet more than one official. Ironically though, the satisfaction level of the citizens who met only one official was much lower than those who had to meet more than one official.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERIMENTAL SAMPLE (Computerized)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Days</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size N =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 day or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some days #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average time 1.5 days</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# - Some respondents have mentioned that it had taken them ‘some days’ to get their work done. They were not able to quantify the time it took for them to get their work completed. We have assumed it to be equal to the 4 days on an average and have computed the average time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Days</th>
<th>Number of Citizens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size N =</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 day or less</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some days #</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average time 3.8 days

**Amenities at the Card Office**

Regarding amenities, the survey checked the availability of toilets, shade/covered area for waiting, seating space, drinking water, and an information/help desk. The data on these amenities is unevenly distributed across the centres: for example, about a third of the centres had toilets; some of the larger towns did not have access to drinking water; seating space was almost ubiquitously available.

The presence of these amenities is quite critical to the overall level of satisfaction: a relatively higher proportion of people who felt that the CARD office that they had visited had these
facilities were satisfied than those who felt that their CARD office did not have these amenities. This strong correlation corroborates with the control group data, where satisfaction levels are lower, but so is the availability of public amenities. Hence, levels of satisfaction are not driven solely by the computerisation of the service, but are swayed quite significantly by the availability of traditional, down-to-earth amenities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERIMENTAL SAMPLE (Computrised Office)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Availability of Amenities (Figures in %)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shade / Covered area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information / Help Desk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table below would explain it better. The figures indicate the proportion (%) of ‘Extremely satisfied’ citizens who had said ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to the existence of the facility. For instance, 71% of those who said that the CARD office has a ‘Toilet facility’ were extremely satisfied with the ‘overall service’ that they received from the agency as against 28% of those who said that there were no toilet facilities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability of facilities and overall satisfaction</th>
<th>% extremely satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shade / Covered area</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating space</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information / Help Desk</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures clearly indicate that the availability of these facilities definitely contributes towards boosting satisfaction scores.

**Amenities in the non-computerized offices**
As is evident in the table given below, very few amenities are available at the non-computerized offices. And this has a bearing on the overall satisfaction of the citizens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTROL SAMPLE (Non-Computerized Office)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Amenities (Figures in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shade / Covered area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information / Help Desk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The facilities available at the non-computerized office pales in comparison with those available at the computerized CARD offices.

Summary – CARD Survey

Though the satisfaction level of the experimental sample (Computerized offices) is comparable to that of the ‘Control sample (non-computerized offices), the ‘delight’ level of the citizens visiting the computerized offices is much higher than those at the non-computerized offices.

The current ‘overall experience’ of the citizens at the CARD offices has improved over their earlier experiences - 82% of those surveyed believed so. However, ‘Staff behaviour’ is an area which hasn’t seen much change over what it was in the past.

No clear and consistent procedure was being followed across all the CARD offices. While the majority (70%) of the citizens submit a pre-designed application form, around 20% of them made a verbal application request. This mode of application doesn’t seem to have any bearing on the quality of service received.

The average time taken to make an application request ranges from 5.75 minutes for getting Stamp papers to 16.25 minutes for ‘registration’. The average time taken by any citizen to submit an application form is 15 minutes that is about 50% higher than the expected ideal time.

A prime objective of the recent computerization initiatives taken was that the time taken to offer the services to the citizens be reduced. However, in over 25% of the cases, it has taken at least 2 days for the citizens to get their work done at the CARD office.
The survey did not directly address the issue of corruption, since it was hard to establish metrics to measure this (also, the respondents were being interviewed in the government offices concerned, and had their business still being taken care of). However, the question of whether the job could have been done easier by going to a higher official or paying a higher "fee" was posed: with the exception of one centre where the response was in the affirmative, the other centres did not provide a statistically significant answer.

As one would expect, the satisfaction level of the citizens in the computerized offices is higher than that of the citizens who visited the non-computerized offices. Other aspects such as the scores on availability of basic amenities, the average time it takes to get a job completed and the overall quality of interactions that the citizens have with the staff in the computerized offices are clear pointers that the computerization initiatives at the CARD offices are beginning to have a positive effect on the service quality that is delivered.
SECTION III
Feedback on Commercial Taxes Offices

Commercial taxes are an important component of the State Administration. Given the wide network of operations, and the need to monitor them effectively, this was a prime candidate for early introduction of IT. This department is also an area where there is a continuous and direct citizen interface.

Sample size and Coverage

For this survey, 10 citizens each were interviewed in the CTOs located in Maharajganj, GD Metla, Khairatabad and SD Road. While choosing the offices, it was ensured that adequate representation is given to different types of commercial establishments - ranging from corporate houses and industrial establishments to small shops in markets. For instance, SD Road & Kharitabad offices have a large proportion of respondents from the Corporate houses while the CTO at GD Metla has more industrial clients. Maharajganj is more of a market area catering to a number of small shops.

In addition to this, a ‘control’ sample of 10 corporate houses was interviewed in non-computerized registration offices in ‘Karnataka’ to measure the relative impact of computerization in AP. The reason why Karnataka was chosen is because of the fact that all the CTOs in AP are computerized.

Methodology

The addresses of the CT payers were given to Gallup. Gallup investigators met the respondents after fixing up prior appointments with them. The interviews were carried out at a place of the respondents’ convenience.
The areas covered in the CT survey were similar to that for the CARD survey:

- Purpose of visit to the CTO (the CTO provided services like Filing of Tax returns, Registration, Assessment, Litigation etc.)
- Level of overall satisfaction
- Quality of interaction with officials
- Comparison with previous visits, prior to computerisation (for the relevant sample)
- Application-related activities:
  - Procedures
  - Time taken to submit the application
  - Complexity of the application forms
  - Post-application dealings
- Getting the job done:
  - Time taken
  - Ease of getting the job done
  - Number of visits
  - Number of officials met
- Facilities at the Registration Office:
  - Assistance
- Hours of operation

**Company profile**

Representatives from the companies with a sales turnover ranging from less than a crore (55% of the companies in the sample) to over Rs. 5 crores (17.5% of the companies). The rest were in the Rs. 1 crore to 5 crore bracket.

While foods and beverage industries constituted around a quarter of the sample, the rest of the sample was drawn out
from industries as diverse as IT, Textiles, Paper, Cattle feed, Fabrication etc.

**Purpose of visit**

The Commercial Taxes Office (CTO) provides a variety of services to the citizens of the state. Most of the respondents visited the Commercial Tax office for getting more than one task completed. 80% of the citizens visited the CTO to file tax returns and 68% visited the CTO for tax assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of the visit</th>
<th>Citizens utilizing the service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Sample Size) = 40</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filing ‘Sales tax’ returns</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filing ‘Entertainment tax’ returns</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litigation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on tax deductions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall Satisfaction**

Of the respondents, 32.5% are somewhat satisfied and 42.5% are extremely satisfied with their experience with the CTO (a total of 85% who are satisfied or better). This compares with Control Group data where 40% were somewhat satisfied and 20% were extremely satisfied with their experience (a total of 60% who were satisfied or better).
Respondents utilizing the service (Figures in %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Sample Size N)</th>
<th>Computerized Office</th>
<th>Non-computerized (Control Sample)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison with the previous visits

Eighty five percent (85%) had visited the CTO on at least 4 previous occasions. Given that the computerisation of the CTO took place in 1998, some of the respondents had not visited the CTO before computerisation. Hence comparisons with previous visits were with respect to the same type of service infrastructure i.e. computerisation. The lack of perceptible improvement in the experience is probably explained by this factor: only 48% felt that there was an improvement in the overall experience, while a similar number felt that there was no difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of people who had visited CTO before 1998</th>
<th>Overall experience</th>
<th>Layout</th>
<th>Staff behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has deteriorated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has remained the same</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has improved</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the Control sample (Bangalore), six or more respondents (out of 10) felt that their experience with the CTO has remained the same over what it was earlier.

The center-wise inferences have to be viewed with much caution because of the very small sample sizes.

**Time to get the job completed**

A prime objective of the recent computerization initiatives taken was that the time taken to offer the services to the citizens be reduced. And in almost all the cases (36 out of 39), the work was completed within a day or less.

**Post-application dealings**

In most of the cases (37 out of 40), the receipt of the application was formally acknowledged.

There seems to be some inconsistency in informing the applicant whether his application formalities were complete. While 35% (14 out of 40) were not informed thus, the remaining respondents said that they were informed whether their application was complete. This issue was most prevalent in GD Metla where 8 out of 10 respondents claimed that they were not informed whether the application formalities were complete.

In as many as 68% of the cases, the respondents were not informed when they should visit next to proceed further. Nor were the respondents (in 31 cases) clearly informed about how many visits it would take for them to get their job completed.

These two complaints were most prevalent in GD Metla and SD Road where almost all the respondents claimed that they weren’t informed about the future visits that may be necessary.
Ease of getting the job done

Eighteen percent (7 out of 40) of the citizens across all the CTOs did not know whom to contact in case there is any delay or difficulty. This was surprising given that all the respondents had visited the CTOs at least twice before.

Around 65% of the citizens had to meet more than one official to get their work done. On an average, every respondent spent around 20 minutes waiting to meet these officials.

Baring a few exceptions, a vast majority of the respondents (36 out of 40) said that their job was completed within a day. Only two respondents felt that the process can be hastened by paying a higher fee or by approaching a higher official.

In the control sample however (Bangalore) however, 6 respondents out of 10 said that they can expedite the process by meeting a higher official or by using personal contacts.

Quality of Interactions

Over 85% of the respondents felt that the officials in the CTO were polite and helpful when they were approached. The proportion of respondents who were dissatisfied on these accounts was very small. On the other hand, though 83 % of the respondents (33 out of 40) said that the officials were active in their work, 13% said that the officials were not active while carrying out their duties. Despite this, as high as 45% believed that the staff behaviour had improved over what it was earlier.

Summary – Commercial Taxes

As expected, the ‘Delight level’ of the respondents with the quality of service that they received from the CTO is much higher for the experimental sample, (computerized CTOs) when compared to the non-computerized offices in Karnataka. On
parameters such as availability of instruction sheets / help desk or the ease of getting a job completed without having to meet higher officials or use personal contacts, the CTOs in AP are performing relatively better than the control sample in Karnataka.

The respondents in all the centres visit the CTOs regularly. All the respondents have visited the CTOs at least twice before and over 85% of them have visited the CTO at least four times before. This could be the reason for them being clear on the steps that they have to follow to get their work done.

Only 50% of the respondents feel that there has been an improvement in the CTOs (lay out, ease of getting their job done and staff behaviour) over the past. This pales in comparison with the CARD office where the figure reads 82%.

For a large majority of the respondents (36 out of 40), it takes less than a day to get their work done. And almost all of them believe that paying additional money or meeting higher officials will not help much in getting expediting their job.
SECTION IV
Mandal Revenue Office (MPHS)

The Mandal Revenue Offices perform the important function of providing caste certificates and similar identity certificates, that enable citizens to access college admissions, pensions, etc. Notwithstanding the time and effort that go into collecting and verifying the information, it poses enormous burden on citizens to access this in a short time within which certificates have to be submitted. The computerisation effort was initiated on a pilot basis in 78 mandals; however, not much of the work had been completed during the time of the survey.

The study of the MROs (Mandal Revenue Offices) was carried out from the point of gaining some insights. In this phase of the exercise, 17 citizens each were interviewed in the mandal offices located in Sheikpet and Amirpet. The interviews with the citizens on the quality on service that the MRO provides were carried out in the MRO premises.

Fifty percent (50%) of the citizens visited the MRO to obtain caste certificates while 21% visited the MRO to obtain pension or pension assistance. The proportion of people who visited the MRO to get the caste certificate was evenly split between Sheikpet and Amirpet. Across the two centers, only 41% of the citizens were aware that the MRO was computerized and this figure goes up to 47% at the Amirpet office. In half of these cases, the citizens got to know about the computerization from the MRO staff or other government officials. An additional 21% claimed that they became aware of the computerization of MROs only after visiting the office personally.

Of the 14 citizens who are aware of the computerization of MROs, 8 citizens felt that the computerization is not useful to them while the remaining 6 felt that it was ‘somewhat useful’.
Fifty nine percent (59%) of the citizens are dissatisfied with their experience with the MRO. The dissatisfaction appears to be a lot higher in Amirpet where 13 out of 17 (~ 76%) citizens are dissatisfied with the service offered.

In Sheikhpet, over half the citizens are 'satisfied' with the MRO and 38% were dissatisfied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure not in %</th>
<th>Computerized</th>
<th>Non-computerized (Control Sample)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Sample Size) N =</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely satisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat satisfied</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat dissatisfied</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A prime objective of the recent computerization initiatives taken was that the time taken to offer the services to the citizens be reduced. In Sheikhpet, for over a third of respondents, their work is still under processing. In Amirpet, four citizens (out of 17) were able to get their work completed within a day while the work is still in process for 5 citizens. To as many as 4 citizens (out of 34) it had taken around 30 days to get their job completed.

Only 12 out of 34 citizen knew whom to contact at the MRO. Around one in five citizens have had to meet more than one official to get their task completed. Around 90% feel that they can get their work expedited by approaching a higher official or by paying a higher fee. Such a belief was much stronger in Sheikhpet where all the respondents felt that they can get their work expedited by either of the two methods.
SECTION V
Concluding Remarks

The assessment of the IT work done by the AP government provides insights at three levels: impact, leadership and sustainability.

Impact

1. The introduction of IT has lead to a clear improvement in the delivery of the specific public services covered in this study. More important, the perception about improvement in services is also shared widely by the public.

2. There are variations in the level of improvements achieved across locations. Hence there is a need for these efforts to be converted into standardised operating procedures, so that a consistent service delivery can be created across the various offices of the Department concerned.

3. The responses need to be understood in the context of public perceptions and expectations of the level of Government service delivery; hence, even marginal improvements in areas where there is strong citizen discontent can create a significant positive effect. This can be a virtuous cycle, which needs to be constantly fed, so that iterative improvements are made in the services concerned. In this regard, the response to the CT Department, which indicates little change since the computerisation began, is a warning flag.

4. From the perspective of private sector service delivery, these departments still have many service "gaps". Examples are the complexity of the application forms; the post-application dealings where there was little standardisation in keeping the citizen informed of the next steps, or the process to
follow; the variation and ambiguity in the number of officers to meet to get the job done.

5. The improvement in the efficiency of services cannot be immediately combined with reduced corruption. As mentioned earlier, it is likely that these are iterative steps where the citizens’ demand improved services as a matter of routine rather than as a purchased privilege. From a normative perspective, this is an important issue, since it affects the “buy-in” that the computerisation gets from department staff at the grassroots level. Asking for improved efficiency and reduced corruption at the same time is probably seeking much beyond what is practical in one step.

Leadership

1. No change can be brought without informed political leadership. The Chief Minister has played a critical role in pushing the IT-process forward, not just as the manager of the State Government but also as one who understands the implications of the changes.

2. It is critical to get buy-in from constituencies outside the political-administrative system, i.e. with the citizens themselves. As mentioned earlier, this is necessary to ensure that the IT-led changes are not politicised.

3. A good sequence for implementing computerisation across a State-wide system is to start with the layers that have the greatest interface with the citizen: Registration, Commercial Taxes, Drivers’ Licences etc. This secures the buy-in that allows the IT-changes to percolate into the inner and more important layers of Government.

4. IT-plans that begin with grandiose ambitions of making radical changes have little chances of success, because of the in-built resistance of the system. While this seems
intuitive enough, the solution is not: the AP story is an example of doing it right, where the Chief Minister has acted like a political entrepreneur and nurtured small experiments in computerisation. Once these demonstrate scalability, he has funded expansion of these activities. This process allows for the natural termination of some projects, and for best practices to emerge from actual experiences.

5. The pace of implementation needs to be a judicious blend of speed and caution. The AP Government throws up lessons on both fronts. While CARD and CT are examples of good implementation, the MPHS programme offers good learning on the pitfalls of taking on a larger IT task.

**Sustainability**

A third perspective raises the questions: Is all this really worth it? Can IT-led changes in Public Administration make a sustainable difference in the provision of Government Services? The assessment of the AP Government’s efforts indicates that IT offers genuine hope. If implemented well with informed political leadership and citizen participation, Information Technology has the capacity to create irreversible change in the functioning of the government. There are many aspects to this:

1. The AP assessment indicates that even the department staff wants to have a sense of job fulfilment. Proper training not only repositioned them for their new jobs but also gave them a sense of pride in their work.

2. IT enabling requires little physical infrastructure to be built in the form of brick and mortar. Hence, a government officer has little “perks” to cling on to with the introduction of computerisation.
3. In the Internet world (which seems quite removed from the day to day operations of today’s government), communication provides the basis for information decentralisation. With an intelligent recognition that computerisation is only the first step, and that information processing and access to the processed information is the logical second step, the State Governments can transfer the power built into information, to the common citizens.
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