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Q8

E-governance, as a critical tool of governance, has ushered in effectiveness, transparency and accountability in governments. What inadequacies hamper the enhancement of these features?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · GS II · 10 marks · Transparency and e-Governance

Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance - applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency and accountability and institutional and other measures.

Core demand of the question

- E-governance has ushered in effectiveness, transparency and accountability in governments
- State what inadequacies hamper the enhancement of these features

Revision summary

DBT, GeM, e-procurement and grievance portals improved speed and audit trails.

The digital divide and kiosk dependence recreate intermediaries.

Departmental silos and app-only design cut effectiveness.

Dashboards without speaking orders and without access logs cut transparency and accountability.

Capacity, cyber risk and incomplete data-protection practice are the institutional brakes.

Introduction

E-governance is the use of digital systems to deliver public services, records, and payments. It has improved speed and traceability where Aadhaar-seeded **Direct Benefit Transfer**, online grievance portals, and e-procurement actually run; inadequacies in design, access, and law still cap those gains.

Body

Gains that set the test

- **Direct Benefit Transfer** on the Aadhaar and Jan Dhan rails cut ghost beneficiaries in several subsidy streams and made the payment trail auditable.
- **Government e-Marketplace**, e-procurement, and the Right to Information online filing improved price discovery and a paper trail.
- MyGov, Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System, and State service-plus portals shortened some citizen-to-department paths.
- Effectiveness, transparency, and accountability therefore rise when the digital record is complete, open to audit, and tied to a named officer.

Inadequacies of access and design

- Digital divide by language, disability, gender, and rural connectivity leaves the same citizen dependent on a kiosk operator, which recreates the old middleman on a screen.
- Data standards differ across departments, so a land record, a ration card, and a police FIR do not talk to each other; effectiveness falls when the citizen still visits three offices.
- Platform downtime, weak last-mile Common Service Centres, and exclusive app-only design exclude users whom the service law still treats as entitled.

Inadequacies of transparency and accountability

- Dashboards can display counts without publishing the rule, the fee, or the officer who rejected the file; that is visibility without transparency.
- Algorithmic targeting in welfare and policing is often opaque; the citizen cannot contest a silent rejection when no speaking order is generated.
- The [Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023](#), and still-evolving data-retention practice have not yet produced a clear, citizen-facing log of who accessed whose record.
- Cyber incidents, vendor lock-in, and poorly audited private partners create new fiduciary risks that paper files did not have in the same form.
- RTI exclusions, poorly maintained public databases, and the gap between a computerised token and a reasoned order hamper accountability even when the portal is live.

Institutional inadequacies

- Capacity of Block and municipality staff to use systems is uneven; hardware missions without process re-engineering digitise delay.
- Inter-State and Union-State platforms ([GSTN](#) is the strong exception) remain silos, so federal services do not look like one government to the user.

Flow diagram

E-governance-governance -> DBT e-procurement grievance
DBT e-procurement grievance -> Trail and audit
Divide silos opacity downtime -> Hamper Trail and audit
Capacity and DPDP logs -> Trail and audit

Conclusion

E-governance has raised effectiveness, transparency, and accountability where payments, procurement, and grievances leave a complete digital trail. Inadequacies of access, interoperable records, speaking orders, data protection, and local capacity still hamper those three features.

Facts & figures

Direct Benefit Transfer

Union payment architecture that credits subsidies and scholarships to Aadhaar-linked bank accounts.

Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

Online public procurement platform intended to improve price discovery and a purchase trail.

CPGRAMS

Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System for online grievances against Union departments.

Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023

Union statute on processing of personal digital data; relevant to logs and purpose limitation in e-governance.

GSTN

Goods and Services Tax Network; a rare Union-State shared digital backbone for tax filing and matching.

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