

Governance is a critical challenge in every society. It is more so in developing countries like India. It is a challenge because governance is about meeting citizens' needs within the available limited resources. It is a challenge because of the serious issue of corruption, wastage of scarce resources as well as negligence about development needs and service delivery of essential goods to the citizens. Thus the need to share and learn from widespread and yet scattered sustainable practices of governance projects. The Governance Knowledge Centre (GKC) project, administered by Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India, is all about providing a platform of resource pool for governance stakeholders to learn and share governance practices for replication and deployment. The GKC Portal is a facilitating information and communication platform serving as an emerging governance reservoir for governance practitioners, academia, civil society and others to know and share governance models for community empowerment, rural development and poverty reduction. The Centre for the Study of Law & Governance (CSLG), JNU is acting as the Governance Knowledge Centre which has the mandate at first place to explore on what could possibly be rated as a best governance practice.

Prof. Amita Singh, Project Director, GKC & Chairperson, CSLG, JNU talks about the governance objectives behind the GKC and the mandate of CSLG in this GKC initiative to Syed S. Kazi.

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Q: What are the Governance Knowledge Centre (GKC) Project and the portal about? How is the GKC facilitated to realize various governance goals? How poverty eradication can be linked to GKC with best possible outcomes?

It is about evaluating the so rated successful governance practices which have in some way made a sustainable impact upon the lives of ordinary people. Under GKC project an evaluation of successful practices looks into the processes of formulation and implementation also. These findings are fed into a knowledge repository available to an administrator enabling him or her to answer some of the most perplexing questions about the prospects of a design in a programme. This may help prevent policy backfiring and also save cost and efforts in trying to push a weak or fuzzy design into public lives. Reducing extreme

poverty to half by 2015 is the first MDG and every other policy achievement in the process of development is linked to it. Hence all over the world governments are focusing upon capacity building of the poor through many innovative programmes. GKC portal (www.indiagovernance.gov.in) shortens the search for what could be best applicable through evaluation and knowledge sharing across the globe. It also helps to discard many poverty reduction strategies accepted in traditional administration and colonial mindset of bureaucracy.

Q: What is the mandate of Centre for the Study of Law & Governance (CSLG) in streamlining the GKC goals and objectives?

CSLG is acting as the Governance Knowledge Centre which in the first place explores on what could possibly be rated as a best practice. It

then collects and analyzes best practices by using innovative methodologies of ethnographic action research and participatory rural survey techniques. It classifies practices on the basis of the degree and type of capacity upgradation needed and the kind of administrative reengineering required at the local level. Once a study of a best practice is put up on the GKC/DARPG website it would incite discussion and inspire new ideas which would in turn advance an understanding of workable solutions in governance.

Q: What are the key governance challenges in India from various perspectives- the administrative, institutional and community perspectives?

The key challenge is of course an institutional challenge and to address it one would use administrative reforms and community involvement at every stage.

Q: How deployment of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and its various tools like the Internet Technologies will streamline governance performance? Do you think technology is the panacea to malfunctioning of governance set ups?

Technology helps in record keeping and networking but it is run by individuals which creates a skeptical domain for its further application. A good case is the fact that while e-governance led municipal and other service delivery reforms have been able to seep into ordinary lives in Gujarat the same reforms have not even been acknowledged by common people in Haryana. An ethnographic survey answers this question.

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Q: What is the uniqueness of this

Governance Knowledge Centre (GKC) Project? In what way the research on governance implementation theory will be strengthened by this?

It is for the first time since independence that the government of India has undertaken a ground survey of implementation processes of policies which have already been declared as successful. Many of them have been declared successful by government agencies also hence the move is introspective.

Implementation studies have been a missing link of administrative reforms in India and thus policies continued to be formulated even though they were consistently being backfired at the ground. Enormous money has been wasted, rent seeking regimes have multiplied and pilferage of public funds by local agencies has become an accepted practice. Most feedback mechanisms collapse when a policy backfires. GKC rationalizes policy processes through serious research, solutions exchange and debates on strategies amongst partners. It would raise new set of indicators missed out in the past by implementation scholars.

Q: How will this governance informational repository actually benefit grassroots governance challenges with different socio-economic and cultural dynamics?

The primary task is to benefit the grassroots through administrative solutions or networking designs and strategies. For example a knowledge exchange of best practice from a village Libao in Gansu province in China suggests how various government agencies at the grassroots such as water department, marketing Board, community development, land management, horticulture and forestry etc can work together to achieve the task of poverty reduction in a village. In India integrated

approaches generally do not take place due to insulated departments which not only compete with each other but also dump difficult responsibilities on each other. In another case from Hainan in China an idea took into practice as to how each department could innovate projects to overcome fund scarcity for development and poverty reduction. On the contrary departments in India cry foul for funds all the time and every policy backfire is blamed due to lack of funds. Many innovative areas emerge through administrative sharing to add up to the knowledge of bureaucracy.

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