E-government and Gender Equality

Anita Gurumurthy

IT for Change

Why focus on gender in e-government?

- Targeting women through digitally mediated transactions

- New exclusions in 'digital by default'?

- Need to *think gender by design*

E-gov – more than the sum of its technical parts

- UN e-govt index: performance of egov
  - online services, telecom and human capital
- Whither outcome?
- Can we measure e-gov by 'good governance' parameters?
- Not merely technical aspects of administrative simplification but political aspects of strengthening democracy by furthering transparency and accountability

A framework on gender equality and e-gov

- E-gov more than online service provisioning
- Institutional ecosystem approach going into the norms, rules and practices around:

  - Online services

  - Connectivity architecture

  - Citizen uptake

    and how good governance is obtained in this institutional ecosystem

A framework on gender equality and e-gov

- **Gender equality – key dimension of good governance outcomes**

- **Important to see what all this adds up to for**
  - Delivering governance that works for women
    - fostering citizens' capacities for participation, enforcement of the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, successful mediation of competing interests, and a strategic vision for human development
  - Changing women's status

Gender responsive egovernment = enhanced accountability to women + status change for women

Research study on Egovt and Gender Equality - supported by UNESCAP and UNPOG

Institutional ecosystem analysis

1. How are emerging **norms** impacting women's empowerment and gender equality?

2. How do new **rules** legitimising the structures and procedures of e-government impact women's empowerment and gender equality?

3. How do everyday **practices and cultures** of e-government impact women's empowerment and gender equality?

Analytical framework - e-gov institutional ecosystem for shift in gender relations

	Norms	Rules	Practices
Service delivery			
Citizen uptake			
Connectivity architecture			

Service delivery: Norms, rules and practices (some key analytical pegs)

- Approach to gender-mainstreaming in service delivery, and women-focused services

- Data security and privacy in digitalised service delivery systems

- Predictability (Do digitalized beneficiary targeting and tracking mechanisms have appropriate support mechanisms for the last mile to support marginalized women? Are the work-flows transparent?)

- Governance of new partnerships (what are the protections instituted for women's citizen rights in service delivery arrangements where there are third parties in last-mile service delivery?)

- Convergence and movement away from silos to optimise marginalised women's interactions with service providers

- Shifts in human mediation (is there some flexibility in exercising human discretion to weigh gender justice concerns?)

Citizen participation: Norms, rules and practices (some key analytical pegs)

- New norms of citizen engagement to ensure citizens' right to be heard in online dialogue forums (proactive outreach to ensure women's engagement in e-participation forums)

- Open data frameworks that recognise the importance of creating gender-disaggregated data sets that can guide decentralised planning processes

- Technical openness to ensure the participation of the poorest woman who does not use high-end hardware or software is not compromised.

- Extent to which the importance of creative strategies for eliciting women's participation is recognised.

- Mediation of online e-participation forums to balance the agenda of creating 'safe' spaces for women with that of ensuring authenticity of public opinion and citizen voice

Connectivity architecture: Norms, rules and practices (some key analytical pegs)

- Existence of a gender lens in connectivity and broadband policy frameworks

- Gender-responsiveness in public access programme implementation

- Use of multiple ICTs for citizen outreach (including fixed and wireless broadband, mobile apps, community media etc.)

Scope of the research study

Australia, India, Fiji, Philippines and South Korea, over a 14 month time-frame

State of art analysis in each country

- historical evolution of the e-government ecosystem;

- status of e-service delivery, citizen participation mechanisms and connectivity architecture

- review of existing legal frameworks

Two case studies in each country, focusing on

- initiatives with a clear vision/mandate on women's empowerment

- initiative which sought gender mainstreaming in its strategies

- initiative covering a large proportion of women beneficiaries

Country case studies

Australia

Our Watch: an initiative using a combination of traditional and new social media outreach, and community events, to create an alternative discourse on gender and sexuality, and 'break the silence' on domestic violence.

SA Community: a public information directory linked to Australia's public libraries created through community crowd-sourcing, that especially reaches out to older women.

Country case studies (contd.)

Fiji

mWomen: a subscription-based SMS service between Vodafone and Department of Women, Fiji on women's legal rights, especially in the context of GBV

Fiji Government Telecentre Initiative: facilitate free access to IT services for those who live in remote areas and to cater to socio-economically disadvantaged groups

Country case studies (contd.)

India

SreeSakthi portal: Government of Kerala initiative to create 'safe' space for discussion for geographically dispersed women's collectives

SERP-IVR: A reporting system to help women community volunteers track GBV cases in the state of Andhra Pradesh

Country case studies (contd.)

Philippines

Blended Learning programme: offered by the TESDA women's centre for skills development that leads to women's increased work force participation and enterprise

Grievance Redressal System of PPP: that helps women effectively claim their conditional cash transfer benefits and get grievances solved on time

Community e-Centres: Access to public information, alternative learning systems, and digital skills that open up new employment opportunities for women and girls in rural and remote areas.

Country case studies (contd.)

South Korea

Cyber-mentoring Portal: MOGEF's web-based service to help women in the early stages of their careers find mentors

Sex Offender Alert: MOGEF's public alert system that balances public safety and confidentiality concerns effectively in sex offences

Safe Return Home mobile app: Safety- app that uses the spatial database in the public domain.

Findings – Service Delivery

- Gender responsive e-Government is a normative shift in the idea of governance, requiring new rules and practices (expanded democracy and enabler of rights)

- A well designed and well-implemented e-Government framework can even be transformative – bringing a threshold change to women and men's citizenship. **(converse is that egovt can become another instrument of the digital divide)**

- 'Informatization' and connectivity need to complement each other for a gender responsive e-Government to function well

Findings – Service Delivery (cont)

- Gender responsive egovernment requires a strong locus of ownership across all levels of government

- Gender responsive e-Government calls for "creative flexibility" and partnerships

- Predictability of, and women's trust in, e-Government services comes from a fine balance between standardisation of digital processes and "human mediation"

- The governance regimes of data influence gender-related outcomes in e-Government

Findings - Citizen Uptake

- Innovations in access needs intermediation (ground-level facilitators) to make e-Government meaningful and transformative for women

- Women's uptake of e-Government depends on their skills to navigate the paradigm shift in the citizen-government relationship

Findings - Connectivity

- Connectivity is not just a technical consideration for egovernment; it is equally about promoting cultures of use

- Free public access is important for gender responsive e-Government, since Internet and smart phone use among women is still low in many developing countries
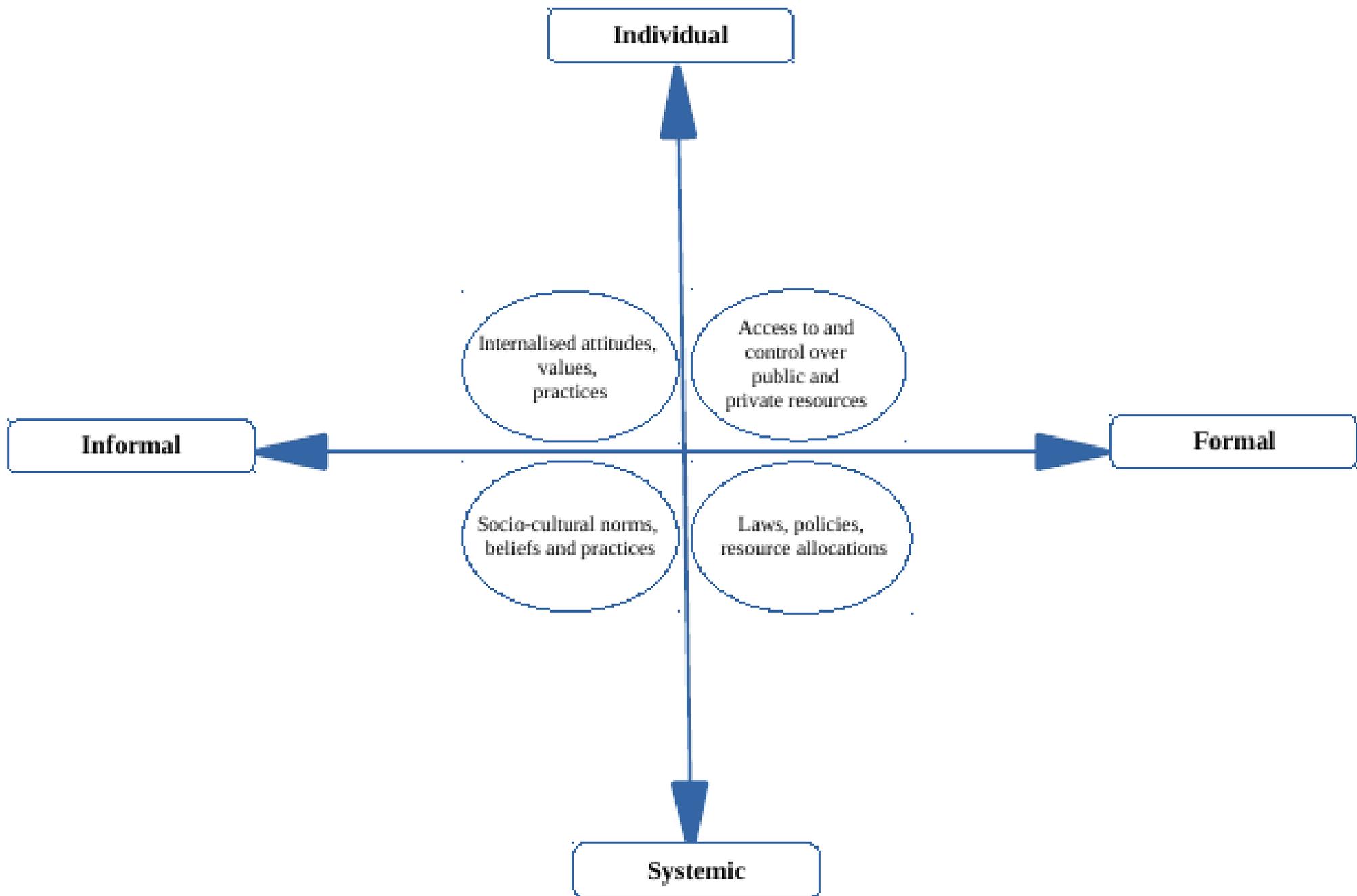
Lessons learned

- Public Private Partnership arrangements and the proprietary Internet platforms in service delivery bring new efficiencies; but they must citizen interest needs to be protected

- Open data about women needs a prudent balancing of privacy and public interest concerns.

- E-government design must avoid protectionism towards women, by bringing in an explicit rights-orientation.

What the case studies revealed for impacts on women's empowerment and gender equality

Individual

Internalised attitudes, values, practices

Access to and control over public and private resources

Informal

Formal

Socio-cultural norms, beliefs and practices

Laws, policies, resource allocations

Systemic

Individual-Formal

Access to educational resources on GBV and positive gender relations

Timely access to institutional support for women seeking assistance

Reduction in time burdens of women community volunteers/ extension workers

Right to be heard

Access to career options

Opportunity for digital skills development

Access to redress

Access to public information on entitlements

Opportunity to contribute to knowledge commons

Individual-Informal

Enhancement of self esteem, psychological rewards, confidence

Enhanced personal security

Courage to move away from gender norms

Confidence to participate in job market

Active agency – as citizenship consciousness improves; expansion of informational and communicative capabilities

Systemic-formal

New platforms for gender stories

Enhanced commitment from state to GBV

Dedicated communication platform/ forum

Right to privacy and public interest balancing in law enforcement

Dedicated mechanism for women's safety

Techno learning platform / knowledge commons responsive to women

Techno-mediated knowledge model for women

Higher systemic capability for gender inclusive service delivery

Resource optimization through convergence

Systemic-informal

New discourse challenging masculinities

Recognition of GBV as a rights and public issue as culture of violence is challenged

Transformation at household level as women gain public recognition

Peer solidarities among women

- **Thank you!**