

Experience Sharing - Amit Chakravarty

1. What is public sector software? Is it -
 - a) Software created by private sector for public sector use but not paid for by government: eSeva, Bangalore One, E-proc
 - b) Software paid for by government -
 - c) Software created by private sector and given *gratis* for public sector use - like Digital gov
2. The policy implications for each of the above will be different. (I have not thought through the policy implications for each category)
3. There is a fourth category of software which is created out of public money - projects which receive financial support from funding agencies like UNDP, UNESCO, etc. Where do we place these? Some of these projects are with government agencies while some are with NGOs. A lot of very good and useful software is created, but the ownership and public accessibility of these artifacts remain fuzzy areas. Funding agencies do not enforce that such software created shall be made available under Creative Commons Licence. Another related issue is that when NGOs get software developed, ownership issues are not well articulated in the vendor's contract and then the vendor stakes his claim during sharing and reuse.
4. Specifically for e-governance projects:
 - a) There is a need to rethink the PPP (Public Private Partnership) model. Today PPP is a synonym for outsourcing. Under the current PPP regime in many projects govt. does not pay for software - since the vendor is expected to recover the cost from user fees - and hence does not have any ownership of the software. Business models are drawn up by private sector consultants and government agencies do not exercise due diligence on ownership aspects.
 - b) There is a section on Strategic Control in any RFP (Request for Proposal) created by NISG, but there is hardly any clarity on what exactly the term means. In most RFPs/ToRs created by govt. departments, this clause is entirely missing.
5. As rightly pointed out (in the Note circulated) areas like bill payments, tax collection, etc. are prominent areas of e-governance. The core areas of governance are currently on the periphery of e-governance. The current vision of e-governance is too narrow and circumscribed. The vision of e-governance has to expand to include "good governance ultimately leading to human development".
6. Institutional Structure - NIC being a public body has developed a huge library of software that is properly and firmly in the public domain. NIC can and should play a more pro-active role in acting as the national custodian (akin to sourceforge.net) of all public-sector software and making them universally accessible.