

Research Article**ICT Enabled Citizen - Centric Governance: A Study of the Duare Sarkar Programme in West Bengal****Dr. Aditya Kumar Gupta¹, Binay Kumar Ram²**¹Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, National P. G. College, Bhongaon, Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh, India.²PhD Research Scholar, Department of Political Science DR. Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Uttar Pradesh, Agra, India**Corresponding Author: Binay Kumar Ram.****Abstract**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly transformed citizen-centric governance and public service delivery. In this context, the present study examines the role of ICT in the Duare Sarkar programme of the Government of West Bengal and its contribution to improving citizen-centric governance and public service delivery. The study also adopts a qualitative and descriptive-analytical research design and is based entirely on secondary sources, including government reports, policy documents, research papers, and other relevant published sources for the present study. The analysis indicates that ICT-enabled mechanisms, such as digital platforms, online application systems, real-time monitoring, and digital data management, have contributed to making government services more accessible, timely, transparent, and citizen-oriented, while strengthening last-mile service delivery. However, challenges related to digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, digital literacy, administrative coordination, technical disruptions, and trained human resources continue to affect the effective implementation of the programme. The study suggests that improving ICT infrastructure, strengthening digital literacy, ensuring better coordination among departments, and providing adequate human and technical resources can further improve the programme. Overall, the study finds that Duare Sarkar is an important ICT-enabled initiative that has contributed to strengthening citizen-centric governance and public service delivery in West Bengal.

Keywords: ICT, Citizen-Centric Governance, Public Service Delivery, Duare Sarkar, E-Governance, West Bengal.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, the concept and practice of governance have undergone significant transformations. Traditionally, governance mainly focused on maintaining administrative control and implementing policies through a top-down approach. However, the focus of governance has gradually shifted towards providing effective, transparent, accountable, and accessible public services to citizens. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has played an important role in this transformation by improving administrative processes, public service delivery, and communication between government and citizens. Public service delivery is an important component of good governance because citizens experience government directly through the services and benefits they receive. Effective public service delivery therefore requires accessibility, timeliness, transparency, efficiency, and

responsiveness to citizens' needs (Mokta, 2013). With the increasing use of ICT, e-governance has become an important part of modern governance. Its main objective is to make government services simpler, more transparent, timely, and accessible through digital means. E-governance can simplify administrative processes, improve service delivery, and make governance more accountable and citizen-oriented. Recent research also indicates that digital technologies can improve the efficiency, accessibility, transparency, and citizen orientation of public service delivery, although challenges related to digital literacy, infrastructure, connectivity, and technical difficulties may affect their effective use (Ali et al., 2025). In India, both the central and state governments have introduced various e-governance initiatives to improve the quality of public services. In this context, the concept of citizen-centric governance has become particularly important. Its main objective is to design and implement policies and public services according to the needs, convenience, and participation of citizens. According to Denhardt and Denhardt (2000), modern public administration should focus not only on administrative control but also on serving citizens effectively. This citizen-oriented approach is particularly important at the grassroots level, where administrative procedures, distance from government offices, lack of information, and other barriers can affect citizens' access to public services. Despite these initiatives, complex administrative procedures, limited public awareness, the digital divide, and geographical distance from government offices can create difficulties in accessing public services, particularly for citizens in rural and disadvantaged communities. This has created a need for mechanisms that can bring government services closer to citizens. With this objective, the Government of West Bengal launched the Duare Sarkar programme on 1 December 2020. Literally meaning "Government at your Doorstep," the programme organizes special service camps in gram panchayats and urban wards. At these camps, citizens can apply for various government schemes, submit required documents, request corrections to official records, and obtain information and assistance related to different government services. This helps reduce the need for citizens to make repeated visits to government offices. A key feature of the Duare Sarkar programme is its use of ICT. Online registration, digital portals, real-time monitoring, and digital data management support the systematic implementation of the programme and facilitate interaction between citizens and the administration. ICT also supports information dissemination, application management, monitoring, and coordination among different government departments, making it an important administrative mechanism rather than merely a technological tool. The programme therefore represents an important example of ICT-enabled citizen-centric governance in West Bengal. Existing studies indicate that the Duare Sarkar programme has improved citizens' access to government schemes and services and has contributed to beneficiary satisfaction. Ash and Chattopadhyay (2025), in their study of Duare Sarkar in Bankura district, reported improved access to government services and beneficiary satisfaction, while also identifying administrative and procedural difficulties in some services. Similarly, Ashik and Roy (2026), in their study of Murshidabad district, found improvements in citizens' access to government services, public service delivery, and beneficiary satisfaction, while identifying challenges such as overcrowding, limited public awareness, and technical difficulties. However, challenges such as crowd management, technical problems, internet connectivity, document verification, and limited public awareness continue to affect the implementation of the programme. Although literature on the Duare Sarkar programme is gradually increasing, the studies reviewed for the present research have mainly examined issues such as service accessibility, beneficiary satisfaction, decentralised governance, and implementation challenges.

Comparatively less attention has been given to ICT as enabling mechanism connecting citizen-centric governance with public service delivery. This gap in the existing literature provides the basis for the present study. Against this background, the present study analyses the

Duare Sarkar programme using secondary sources, including government reports, policy documents, research papers, and other relevant official publications. The study aims to examine how ICT helps strengthen citizen-centric governance through the Duare Sarkar programme and how it contributes to making public service delivery more effective, transparent, and accessible. It also examines the programme's major achievements and challenges and considers their possible policy implications.

Literature Review

Denhardt and Denhardt (2000), through their New Public Service perspective, emphasized the concept of citizen-centric governance. They argued that the primary objective of public administration is not merely to exercise administrative control or manage public services, but to prioritize citizens' needs, participation, and the public interest. They further identified accountability, collaboration, and citizen participation as essential elements of effective and democratic governance. This perspective provides an important conceptual and theoretical foundation for understanding citizen-centric governance.

According to the Government of West Bengal (2022), Duare Sarkar is an ICT-enabled, citizen-centric initiative aimed at bringing government services closer to citizens through locally organised service camps. The report highlights that the use of digital technology has helped make public service delivery more accessible, transparent, and accountable, particularly for disadvantaged and remote communities. It also indicates that the programme has improved citizens' access to various government services. The report therefore provides an important official basis for understanding how ICT contributes to making Duare Sarkar more citizen-oriented and accessible.

Ashik and Roy (2026) examined decentralized governance and citizen-centric administration through the Duare Sarkar programme in Murshidabad district of West Bengal. The study found that the programme improved citizens' access to government services, public service delivery, and beneficiary satisfaction. At the same time, it identified several challenges in implementation, including overcrowding, limited public awareness, and technical difficulties. The study suggests that although Duare Sarkar strengthens citizen-centric service delivery at the local level, its implementation still faces several practical challenges.

Ash and Chattopadhyay (2025) examined the impact of the Duare Sarkar programme on public service delivery in Bankura district of West Bengal. Their study found that the programme improved citizens' access to government services, with a majority of beneficiaries reporting satisfaction with service delivery. The study observed positive outcomes particularly in the implementation of social welfare schemes, while administrative delays and procedural complexities were identified as major challenges in land-related services. Overall, the study highlights both the contribution of Duare Sarkar to public service delivery and the practical challenges associated with its implementation.

Ali et al. (2025) examined public service delivery through e-governance in Tamil Nadu. The study found that e-governance improved the efficiency of administrative processes, increased the transparency and accessibility of public services, and strengthened citizen-centric service delivery. The study also identified digital literacy, basic digital infrastructure, and data security as major challenges to the effective implementation of e-governance. The study provides a useful basis for understanding the relationship between ICT, public service delivery, and citizen-centric administration in the broader context of e-governance.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyse the role of ICT in the Duare Sarkar programme.
- To assess the effectiveness of public service delivery through the Duare Sarkar programme and identify the major challenges in its implementation.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative approach and a descriptive-analytical research design. It is based entirely on secondary sources, including government reports, policy documents, research papers, and other relevant published and official materials. These sources were selected based on their relevance, reliability, and usefulness for the objectives of the study. The collected materials were systematically organised and analysed under key themes, including the role of ICT, citizen-centric governance, public service delivery, and implementation challenges. The analysis focuses on understanding the role of ICT in the Duare Sarkar programme, its contribution to improving public service delivery, and the major challenges associated with its implementation.

Research Findings and Discussions

Role of ICT in the Duare Sarkar Programme

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a key component of the Duare Sarkar programme. The programme is designed as an ICT-driven administrative initiative to facilitate the timely and accessible delivery of government services through community-level outreach camps. According to the Government of West Bengal, ICT supports several functions of the programme, including citizen registration, application management, camp scheduling, online tracking and monitoring, information dissemination, and coordination among different government departments. The programme also uses digital platforms, mobile applications, SMS-based communication, geo-tagging, and real-time status reporting to support the management and monitoring of service delivery. These ICT-enabled mechanisms help organise service-related information, track applications and service delivery, and facilitate coordination between citizens and government agencies. Ali et al. (2025) similarly observed that digital technologies can improve the efficiency, transparency, accessibility, and citizen orientation of public service delivery. In the context of Duare Sarkar, therefore, ICT functions not merely as a technological support system but also as an administrative mechanism that facilitates more systematic service delivery and interaction between citizens and the administration.

This contributes to the programme's broader objective of strengthening citizen-centric governance.

ICT and Citizen-Centric Governance

The effective use of ICT in the Duare Sarkar programme has supported the implementation of citizen-centric governance by bringing government services closer to citizens. The community-level service camps organised under the programme have contributed to last-mile service delivery by reducing the need for citizens to travel to government offices for accessing various services. This approach has particularly aimed to facilitate access for women, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and citizens from remote and disadvantaged communities. According to the Government of West Bengal, ICT-enabled service delivery systems, multiple communication channels, digital platforms, and real-time monitoring mechanisms support the delivery and management of services under the programme. These mechanisms can facilitate citizen access to information, improve administrative monitoring, and support greater transparency and accountability in service delivery. This approach is consistent with the New Public Service perspective of Denhardt and Denhardt (2000), which emphasises citizens' needs, participation, and the public interest in public administration. Similarly, Ashik and Roy (2026) found that the Duare Sarkar programme improved citizens' access to government services, public service delivery, and beneficiary satisfaction. The evidence from official sources and previous studies therefore suggests that ICT-enabled mechanisms have contributed to making service delivery more accessible and citizen-oriented through the Duare Sarkar programme.

ICT and Public Service Delivery

The effective use of ICT in the Duare Sarkar programme has contributed to making public service delivery more accessible, timely, and transparent. Digital portals, online application systems, real-time data management, and digital receipts (e-Receipts) support a more systematic and efficient service delivery process. According to the Government of West Bengal, ICT-enabled digital infrastructure allows citizens to apply for various government schemes and services, track the progress of their applications, and access services in a simpler and more convenient manner.

The programme also brings together various government schemes related to health, education, social security, food security, and livelihoods, thereby facilitating citizens' access to a range of public services. According to official reports, the programme was also designed to contribute to the achievement of 10 of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Real-time monitoring, digital documentation, and coordination among different government departments further support service delivery and administrative accountability. This finding is consistent with Ash and Chattopadhyay (2025), who found that the Duare Sarkar programme improved citizens' access to government services and contributed to administrative efficiency. Similarly, Ali et al. (2025) argued that ICT-enabled e-governance plays an important role in providing public services in an effective, transparent, and accountable manner. The evidence from official sources and previous studies therefore suggests that ICT-enabled mechanisms have contributed to making public service delivery under the Duare Sarkar programme more accessible, systematic, transparent, and citizen-oriented.

Challenges in the Implementation of the Duare Sarkar Programme

Although the Duare Sarkar programme has contributed to making public service delivery more accessible and citizen-centric, several practical challenges continue to affect its implementation. According to the Government of West Bengal, challenges related to digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, crowd management, technical problems, coordination among government departments, and the availability of trained human resources have emerged during the implementation of the programme. These challenges may affect the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Similarly, Ashik and Roy (2026) identified limited public awareness, technical difficulties, and administrative pressure as major barriers to the implementation of the programme. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of ICT-enabled service delivery depends not only on the availability of digital systems but also on adequate digital infrastructure, trained human resources, effective administrative coordination, and sufficient digital awareness among citizens.

Therefore, strengthening the implementation of the Duare Sarkar programme requires improvements in ICT infrastructure, digital literacy and public awareness, coordination among government departments, and the availability of adequate human and technical resources at the local level.

Conclusion

The findings of the study suggest that the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Duare Sarkar programme has contributed to strengthening citizen-centric governance and public service delivery in West Bengal. ICT-enabled service delivery has helped make government services more accessible, transparent, timely, and citizen-oriented, while extending their reach to the last mile. The study also indicates that digital technologies can support the efficiency of administrative processes, service management, and coordination between citizens and the administration. However, challenges related to digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, digital literacy, administrative coordination, and the availability of trained human resources continue to affect the implementation of the programme. Addressing these challenges requires improving ICT infrastructure, promoting digital literacy and public awareness, strengthening coordination among government departments, and ensuring

adequate human and technical resources at the local level. Overall, the available evidence suggests that the Duare Sarkar programme represents an important administrative initiative for promoting ICT-enabled citizen-centric governance and improving public service delivery. Its experience also provides useful policy lessons for the development of citizen-oriented e-governance initiatives in the future.

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