



E-GOVERNANCE IN RURAL INDIA



Introduction

In India approximately 70% of Indian population live in rural area. Today rural development is essential for the development of the Indian Economy. The necessity of harnessing science and technology for transforming rural India has long been recognized. Mahatma Gandhiji had clearly shown an appreciation of this necessity. As early as 1935, at the all India Village industries association. There is now the average rural Indian whose life has been touched by technology has changed for better. In today Information and communication Technologies (ICT) has brought remarkable change in the lives of people in every respect also enabling government to deliver better services even at remotest corners of the country. Various ICT applications have designed specifically for the people residing in rural areas of the country. Ministry of Rural Development has taken various initiatives at different levels by way of strengthening the ICT infrastructure to provide opportunities, information and easy access of the rural development schemes to all citizens in rural India. Such development has facilitated access to innumerable services and information in a very economical manner in a scenario where the cost of accessing information has been a biggest hurdle for the poor farmers. Through

ICT, several e-governance initiatives have been adopted which have ultimately proved to be major contributor in rural development.

1. Objectives

- To Study different E-governance projects under taken by government for rural development.
- To study government faced problems in introducing e-governance.

2. Research Methodology

The research paper is based on secondary data and data is procured from published sources like the website of Ministry of Rural Development, research papers, books and periodicals and newspaper reports.

3. Rural Development

India is a nation with 70% of total population live in rural India. With such large rural population government is required to make concrete efforts for the development of rural areas. Government of India has made considerable efforts like digital India campaign initiated in 2015 to reduce the digital divide and ICT has provided to be a tool for its successful implementation.

4. E-Governance

E-Governance is a way of managing government electronically. With the introduction of information and communication technology e-governance has grown leap and bounds. In developed countries like USA, UK, China, etc. The e-governance was initiated way back and now it is very well developed. But developing countries it is still in growing phase. E-governance is a means by which the whole way of interaction between the citizen and the government changes, thus changing the manner of governance for better.

“E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies that have the ability to transform relation with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and cost reduction.” According to the World Bank

5. NEGP & NIC

For the success of e-governance, Government launched National e-governance plan and with the help of National Information Centre set up a central repository for all e-governance initiatives.

NEGP:- National E-Governance plan was launched with the following vision, “Make all public services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man.” NEGP came up on 18 May, 2006 by Department of Electronics and Information Technology and Department of Administration Reforms and Public Grievances. NEGP was set up 27th Mission Mode Projects and 8th components. It was specially designed for rural areas.

NIC:- NIC is a part of the Indian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology's Department of Electronics and Information Technology and came up in 1976. It is a website designed for all the E-Governance initiative take by

government at one place. This included Blocks, Districts, State Government and central government. The ICT network of NIC is called NICNET.

6. E-Governance projects in Rural India

E-Choupal

India has witnessed massive industrialisation in past decade but still agriculture is a dominant occupation in India. The farmers are often exploited by unreasonable intermediaries at every stage involved in process of selling their produce to the final consumer. Such intermediaries or agents add their profit margin try to hinder the market information. In order to cater to such problems, the International Business Division of Indian Tobacco (ITC-IBD) initiated a step called E-Choupal (which means a village meeting place). Under this initiative various E-Choupals were set in around 6500 villages by 2012 and each E-Choupal was equipped with a PC, internet connection, printer and Uninterrupted Power Supplies(UPS). Through this the managers at ITC-IBD could fetch cheapest raw materials direct from the farmers and farmer's were also able to benefit out of this as there was no intermediary involved. Indian Tobacco Company Ltd. has added 7 new E-Choupals a day and plan to scale up to 20,000 E-Choupals covering 1,00,000 villages in 15 states, servicing 15 million farmers by 2020.

GYANDOOT

Civil servants consulted various Gram panchayats in Dhar district in Madhya Pradesh. The project was started in January, 2000 and named as Gyandoot is very beneficial as it is economical and is owned by rural intranet system that is Soochnalaya, as it helps to fulfil the needs of the villagers of the district. Rural youth manage 25 such centres which were established since January, 2000. The unemployed educated youth were trained and they ran the Soochnalaya and are known as Soochacks. They provide the various types of services information related agriculture, education, health, issues related to women, information about market and user fee is charged for all this. They further serve in making application for the services provided by the district headquarter for ownership of land. Soochnalaya are connected with dial-up lines through internet. Above 600 villages and approximately 50%

of the total population of the district are covered by the network of 31 such Kiosks.

JAGRITIE-SEWA

In the developing nations like India Jagriti E-Sewa in suitable, applicable, accessible and sustainable technology. Sometimes old computers are used in this project with the help of Dial up telephone lines. Minimum time period is required to change the whole system in any language. These Kiosks are located at the centre point of the village or at the most renowned places of village so that one Kiosks can serve minimum 20,000-30,000 villagers. Each Kiosk is on franchise basis where the franchise is an educated youngman or ex-serviceman. Sufficient revenue is to be generated by the franchise to meet the cost.

AKASHGANGA

ICT is being used by Akashganga to help the milk producers of rural areas by making cooperative societies and procuring milk and assists in maintaining accounts. In Gujarat first model of Dairy information System Kiosk (DISK) was implemented at Uttarsanda Dairy Cooperative Society. In this society every farmer is having an individual identification card (plastic card). Their identification is updated in PC when farmers come at Raw Milk Receiving Dock (RMRD) counter. As the milk is emptied in the steel drum the weight of milk can be measured and at the same time it is recorded in the PC. However, one operator is required for filling the cans and a separate operator for measuring fat content. The new technological development includes weighing balance, microprocessor, printer, milk analyzers and a display to carry out these operations.

KISSAN CALL CENTRES

There is change in the language after 50km in India. These call centres are specially made to respond to the issues raised by the farmers in the vernacular language continuously. This scheme was started during April 2002 by the Department of Agricultural & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture. The scheme was launched to deliver the farming villages about the telecom infrastructure. As most of the villagers are not aware of the latest technological development in the country, these centres are specially designed to serve the purpose of creating

awareness among the farmers. Toll free numbers are being provided to the farmers, as the services are to be cost free to all the needy ones. So the Agricultural department and Line departments, SAUs, ICAR organizations are being instructed by the ministry of Agriculture to do the publicity of toll free numbers of KCC. Publicity material includes posters, charts, training and demonstration Programme etc.

TATA KISSAN KENDRA (TKK)

In the Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, TATA Chemical Limited launched Tata Kisan Kendra (TKK). Geographic Information Systems (GIS) helps TKK to tracks basic areas related to farming like soil, ground, water and weather. The new software named GIS informs about the roads, building and rivers. The data is form of the digital maps and provide the information regarding socio-economic, administrative and physical set up. With the help of satellites, images are being processed with further helps to detect insect attacks throughout the state and get estimates of crop. Satellite further helps in upgradation of maps and detecting unproductive farming. 48,000 villages are to be served by about 800 franchisees and 40 more Kiosks.

BHOOMI

Bhoomi is an initiative of Karnataka government to computerize land records. Records of 6.7 million farmers dealing with 20 million records in Karnataka state have been computerized. Revenue department of the Government of Karnataka along with NIC implemented this computerization of land records. A farmer requires his official land records for many purposes like getting a loan on crop from any financial institution or any legal dispute, etc. Problems with earlier systems like the registers of land record were not properly maintained or not very legible lead to its computerization. Any farmer can now readily get their land record from land record Kiosk available and in case of any delay can report to higher officials also. Thus, this leads to transparency. Seeing the success of Bhoomi other states like Andhra Pradesh, Haryana; Madhya Pradesh has also implemented a similar system.

E-POST

Internet and e-mails are a main part of e-governance. E-post service was launched by the secretary of the Department of Posts on 30th January

2004 .But in rural areas these kind of facilities are not available. Keeping this in mind, Department of posts introduced the facility of e-posts. It is a very simple service people can send messages anywhere in India. In this a person who has to send message simply approaches the post office, where the person scans the hand written or printed document and sends it via e-mailstop nearest destination post office. There the print out of the document is taken out, sealed in an envelope and delivered at the destination address. The document can be in any language. A fee of Rs.10/- is charged per A-4 page. For encouragement of the corporate customers post office gives them special e-post rates and other value additions .for corporate customers e-post costs Rs.5 per page. This service tries to bridge the digital divide.

E-PANCHAYAT

Panchayat are local village based self government. In India panchayats play a vital role thus, government felt the need to improve it and transform it, and so e-panchayat was introduced. In fact e-panchayat was identified as the Mission Mode Project(MMP). In this 2,50,000 e-panchayati raj institutions at the gram panchayat, block and zila parishads were identified which were to be with ICT.All the information for the gram panchayat was collected and based on that the e-panchayat was initiated. The e-panchayat comprises of 30 modules with about 150 sub-modules .These modules were based on providing the information to the villagers in various things like agriculture, irrigation, fisheries, etc. and also on the other problems relating to loans from industries, housing, water, etc. It also dealt with various other services like property tax, registration and issuance of death and birth certificates, disbursement of old age/widow and disabled pensions, building approvals for residential purposes etc. Thus project caters to all aspects of panchayat's functioning including planning, monitoring, implementation, budgeting, accounting, social audit and delivery of citizen services.

7. Challenges in E-Governance

E-Governance is a way of managing government electronically and it was introduced for the better communication between citizens and government. But the government faced lots of problems in introducing it.

1. Illiteracy

Literacy rate in rural areas stand at 67.67% with rural male literacy rate 77.15% and rural female literacy rate 57.93%. The government is making effort in increasing the literacy rate in rural population but still much need to be done as it is far less than the literacy rate in urban population.

2. IT Illiteracy

In India many of the schemes launched by the government like Kissan Call Centers, Bhoomi ect. Have rural people as end users and because of lack of technical knowledge they are incapable of using the facilities provided by the government. This is major drawback in which the users are not technically literate to use the technology.

3. Varied Languages

In India we have people speaking different languages and the rural population do not know any other language than their native one. All the e-governance projects generally use English as the base language which majority of population do not understand and thus they are unable to benefit out from such projects.

4. Lack of Awareness

People are unaware about the facilities provided by government for their use. Although government has made initiative in certain cases by broadcasting about their projects on radio and TV and putting banners etc. for the awareness among people.

5. Hesitation to change

People are reluctant to change. As e-governance means change of system from manual to computerized, it is generally disapproved by the employees and the general public. People generally dislike it as they need to learn new things in it for which they need to give more time and effort.

6. Infrastructure and running cost

It is difficult to connect all rural areas through internet and at times it is difficult to lay wires and these places. In remote areas generally till now there is no basic infrastructure available like connectivity and electricity.

8. Suggestion for Improving E-Governance

1. Literacy is considered an important factor in economic development. E-governance

programmes run by properly the literacy rate need to be increased and Government initiated many programme for increasing the literacy rate.

2. ICT reduces efforts, time and money in governance. But ICT in India is like a digital devil bent rural and urban areas. Government has intended to bridge the digital by proposing facilities in five year plan and setting up TRAI. (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India)

3. Cloud computing can contribute in a variety of ways to deliver citizen services efficiently and enable IT resources to be provided on demand, at scale in a multi-tenant, and yet secured environment.

4. All e-governance projects initially initiated used English as the medium of communication. But in rural areas where the people are not at all educated and cannot read and write their native dealing in English is definitely a problem. So to counter this failure seven institutions (IIT-M, IIT-K, IIT-B, IIIT-H, TIFR & CDAC-K) and coordinated by IIT-Madras took a initiative and set up a speech based automated commodity price helpline for AGMARKENT introduced in sixth different Indian language so that the farmers may insure about the latest price of agricultural commodities in their own native language.

5. For e-governance re-engineering is a must. The processes, procedures need to be reconstructed to bridge the gap in authenticity of a project and the modern changes and needs required.

9. Conclusions

E-governance is a key to success for good governance. E-governance is one of the most important ways to bridge the digital divide in developing nations like India. It gives the facility to the citizens to benefit from the services provided by government. There has been a considerable increase in the percentage of individuals using the internet in India. The Government faced a lot of challenges but still the move towards e-governance in India has been successful. So E-governance play important role in rural development.

10. References

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