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Impetus of ICT in channelizing the Rural Development work in India

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ABSTRACT

Rural Development is related with economic growth and social justice, improvement in the living standard of the rural people by providing adequate and quality social services and minimum basic needs becomes essential. ICT is the new tool for rural development that eventually accessing the power of provide the information and communication within a no time. Information and Communication Technology, if used properly can be of great advantage for the development at grass root levels. At the same time challenge remains with the administration to capture the minds of the rural masses, mostly illiterate, to make them adapt the new technology which is completely alien to them. It bridge the gap between the government, administrator and people and thus eventually contribute for rural development.

Keywords: ICT, Rural Development and strategies

There has been a recent surge of literature on the so-called 'digital divide' between developed and developing countries. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) refers to systems for producing, storing, sending and retrieving digital files (Bartlett, 2002). These files can contain text, sounds and images, both still and moving. Information and communication technologies, and particularly the Internet, are transforming all human activities dependent on information, including those in rural areas. Though information technology and communication technology were developed independently, they are greatly fused together to produce a new information environment commonly referred to as Information and Communication Technology (I.C.T)

Individuals, groups and organisation have different perceptions about the use of new technologies to improve human efficiencies and quality of life, but if an organisation or a community is mostly affected negatively by the introduction of new technologies, then it could be the way in which that technology was applied and not the technology itself (Neumann, 1994). In the developed world, the ICT revolution has affected every sphere of life and has been of immense benefit to the people. In India for example, information exchange by electronic means has revitalized the role of extension services in providing information, education and decision-making assistance to agricultural producers. The use of ICTs could therefore complement the conventional agricultural extension methods in rural areas. The rural ICT applications attempt to offer the services of central agencies (like district administration, cooperative union, and state and central government departments) to the citizens at their village door steps. These applications utilize the ICT in offering improved and affordable connectivity and processing solutions. Several Government-Citizen (G-C) e-Government pilot projects have attempted

to adopt these technologies to improve the reach, enhance the base, minimize the processing costs, increase transparency, and reduce the cycle times. Introduction of simputers, e-chaupal are some of the initiatives by the government that has up to an extent been able to bring the rural population in contact with the information technology.

Knowledge and Rural Development strategies

he power of knowledge for development can be greatly enhanced by ICTs if they are harnessed to improve access and break down barriers to knowledge because 'while education develops cognitive skills, information gives content to knowledge'. Thus, with the penetration of Internet in rural schools, we would witness a complete revolution. Information Technology Play a important role in Rural School. Today's, education are using IT and ICT. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) which include radio and television, as well as newer digital technologies such as computers and the Internet have been touted as potentially powerful enabling tools for educational change and reform.

Knowledge about the qualitative aspects of economic production and the unequal distribution of qualitative information results in information problems that also contribute to underdevelopment. ICTs have the potential to address both these barriers to economic development by improving access to knowledge and information exchange, but understanding how ICTs can be used strategically to achieve this requires further assessment of both the technologies and the social, political and cultural context in which they could be used.

The strategic use of ICTs for poverty reduction will depend on developing the appropriate infrastructure to enable economic development and appropriate information content for the necessary social and human development to occur. Further analysis of the existing ICT infrastructure, current approaches and proposals could help to inform future rural development strategies but not without a concomitant assessment of the diversity of information users and their knowledge requirements.

Rural Communication and Development

Rural communication is an interactive process in which information, knowledge and skills, relevant for development are exchanged between farmers, extension/advisory services, information providers and research either personally or through media such as radio, print and more recently the new "Information and Communication Technologies" (ICTs). In this process all actors may be innovators, intermediaries and receivers of information and knowledge. The aim is to put rural people in a position to have the necessary information for informed decision-making and the relevant skills to improve their livelihoods. Communication in this context is therefore a non-linear process with the content of data or information.

ICT & e-Governance

Information and communication technology and e-governance are very helpful for development of our country. Without the help of government we cannot implement technologies in rural areas. Government provides the authority to the organizations for implementing the technology in rural areas and also government provide various other services to the citizens for rural and urban area through internet or other media like markets, health, and education. Furthermore, ICT can empower the poorer by expanding the use of government services, and reduce the risks by widening access to micro finance Application of ICT processes governance is divided into two categories i.e. improving government process and second bounding interaction within civil society. The applying information and communication in public domain by the government is known as e-governance. Further , e-governance help in providing information to citizens and it also generate innovative ideas for wealth generation for rural citizen.

ICT Availability for Rural Applications

Computers have become more powerful, user friendly and less expensive. The PC revolution has brought them closer to the users to the extent that in number cases users have designed and developed their own applications. In addition, although the

hardware costs are coming down, the total cost of ownership for rural applications is quite high. The costs of the minimum required gadgets like PC, Modem, Power stabilizer, and Printer along with the license costs of software (OS, Database, and Application as applicable) does not justify their use for offering government related information services, just on the basis of return-on-investment criterion. With the creating to Block level information centre, the people has easy access to internet, computer and information at rural people.

Role of ICT in agriculture

Information and communication have always been vital to people who have grown crops, raised livestock and caught fish. The rural people can access the information to the market demand, price , input avaibality and weather information all through the internet and village Kishkos centre. The smart phone and ICT bring the revolution in reducing the gap with farmers, scientist and market. Now the farmer through their phone can have access the weather data, incidence / pest incidence, market and price, insurance, storage etc . They have sought information from each other regarding the most effective planting strategy on steep slopes, buying of improved seeds or feeds, the highest price being paid in the market and the one paying it and so on. The answers to such questions are hard to come by for the farmers. Updated information can help the farmers to not only cope with but also benefit from these changes. Due to their accessibility, affordability and adaptability, they have found their use even with the rural population. The number and type of ICTs which can develop the life of the farmers has been on the rise.

Role of ICT in e-governance

With the ICTs pervading every sphere of life, they have become omnipresent. Political, Cultural, Socio-economic, Developmental and Behavioral decisions today, rests on the ability to access, gather, analyze and utilize information and knowledge. ICT is the conduit that transmits information and knowledge to individual to widen their choices for economic and social empowerment. It is a proven fact that majority of the Indians live in villages or rural areas. Hence, to ensure a sustainable growth and development of these rural people, the Government of India has introduced the National E- governance Plan (NeGp) which seeks to lay the foundation with various projects, starting from the grass-root level, and providing impetus for long term e-governance within the country.

Scope of ICT in Rural Development

Recent developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have introduced a plethora of opportunities for development in every conceivable area. ICT as an enabler has broken all bounds of cost, distance and time. The fusion of computing and communications, especially through the internet has reduced the world indeed into global village creating new actors and new environments.

All forms of communications have dominated the development scene in which its persuasive role has been most dominant within the democratic political frame work of the country. Persuasive communication for rural development has been given highest priority for bringing about desirable social and behavioral change among the most vulnerable rural poor and women. Initially, the approach lacked gender sensitivity and empathy of the communicators and development agents who came from urban elite homes. Added to these constraints is political will that still influences the pace and progress of rural development. Technological changes further compounded the direction of rural development as information and communication technology (ICT) has been thought by communication and development workers as a panacea for other ills that obstructs the development process. It has lead to indiscriminate applications and use of ICT in every aspect of information dissemination, management & governance of development. While there are few shining examples of achievements of ICT in development, there are a large number of failures and unauthenticated claims.

Challenges of application of ICT in Rural Development

ICTs alone did not bring about rural development. Education is one of the basic problem for application

of ICT as more than 40% of India's population is illiterate. Even than ICT find ways and means to reach at the rural people. For ICTs to succeed in India, education for all must be the first priority. It is, of course, important to note that the proportion of the economy involved in some or other form of adaptation or usage of ICT is still very small. The proportion of people involved in the ICT Industry, especially in the rural areas is negligible. Thus, another priority action, in order for the benefits of ICT to trickle down as well as contribute to the rural prosperity, would involve setting up several rural and village level micro-enterprises.

The basic challenges of ICT for rural development are:

- With the introduction of ICTs in rural India, there has been a big change in rural governance. It has encourage transparency, accountability and administrative efficiency of rural institutions. It encourage the better participation of rural people in development work and decision making. Now the planning is has up from bottom up approach. This has led to not only a better participation of the rural people in the decision making process but also to an improvement in the efficiency and responsiveness of the rural service delivery.
- With the growth in ICT, the flow of information and knowledge beyond the border of economic and social status has received an impetus. In this context, ICTs are now widely recognized as a critical tool to tackle development issues in any developing country which ultimately leads to social transformation.
- The application of ICTs can help to alleviate the living standards of people in remote and rural areas by providing important commercial, social and educational benefits. ICTs can strengthen the livelihood opportunities for rural people by expanding the use of government services.

CONCLUSION

Information and Communication Technology has great relevance in today's world. If implemented properly ICT can surely bridge the gap between economically and technology backward and forward classes. With the IT boom in India technology is easily accessible to the government machineries with relevantly cheaper and convenient manner. Proper training and implementation of ICT programmes in simple way and language which is easily understandable by the rural people can surely bring about revolution in rural development.

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