

Empowerment of Rural Economy Through e-Panchayath. An Analysis.



Economics

KEYWORDS: Government, Democracy, PRIs, Income, Wealth, Decentralization, e – panchayat.

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ABSTRACT

Indian rural Economy is the matter of 68 percent of population where major part of the population till segmented at rural area only. It means greater Opportunities are more to boost up the economy at large. Human resource plays a vital role in bringing such a desirable changes for better tomorrows, so far definition of democracy "Government of the people, by the people, for the people" becomes meaningful when democratic practices actually percolate to the grassroots level. The emergence and evolution of Panchayati Raj System in India has in fact paved the way for further strengthening our democratic roots. Needless to say, decentralization is the key to attain better economic efficiency, accountability and overall socio – Economic development with equitable distribution of Income and Wealth. The cultural Government has recently initiated a member of steps to strengthen the PRIs across the nation sanctioning of thousands of personnel at the gram panchayat level. Construction of new panchayat Bhavans provision of computers and IT enabled tools even in the nook and corner of the is transforming the face of PRIs in India. E-Panchayat project is also providing further fill up to planning, implementation, budgeting, monitoring and delivery of services to the people.

Introduction:

In India, the Panchayati Raj now functions as a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic unit of local administration. The system has three levels – gram panchayat (Village level), mandal parishad or block samiti or panchayat samiti (block level) and zilla parishad (district level) it was formalized in 1992 by the 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution.

Ministry of Panchayat is responsible for the work of advocacy for and monitoring of the implementation of Constitution 73rd Amendment Act the Provision of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996. The State governments/ Union Territory Administrations, at present, are at varying degrees of the implementation of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. The Ministry, inter-alia, would ensure that they hold timely elections, set up State Finance Commissions and implement their recommendations, constitute District Planning Committees and empower them suitably to ensure grass-root level planning effectively. One major task of the Ministry will be to ensure that the State Governments/UT administrations devolve funds, functions and functionaries on the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the spirit of the Constitutional provisions.

e-Panchayat:

As per the World Bank, "E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of governments." Government of India, With an intention to transform the governance landscape by ensuring participation of citizens in policy making and providing ease of access to information to the citizens, introduced the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006. The vision of the NeGP was to "Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable cost to realize the basic needs of the common man" e-Panchayat is one of the Mission Mode Projects (MMP), currently being implemented with a vision to empower and transform rural India.

As a first step towards formulation the project, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj constituted and Expert Group in June, 2007 under the Chairmanship of Dr.B.K. Gairola, Director General, NIC, Government of India. The Expert Group was entrusted with the task of assessing the IT Programmes of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and recommending cost effective solutions along with cost implications. Adopting a consultative approach, the Committee interacted with the States/UTs to assess the existing status of computerization up to the Gram Panchayat level, including the initiatives undertaken by the state Governments. In order to understand the ground realities, the Committee conducted field visits to some of the Gram Panchayats in the selected rural areas where some IT initiatives had been

undertaken. Inputs from eminent experts in the public and private sector were also taken into account as part of the consultative process. In essence, it found that while some computerization efforts had already been made at Panchayat level by States like Gujarat, West Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Goa, these attempts were limited as they were driven by short term goals and were unable to completely transform Panchayats due to the lack of a holistic perspective. It was felt that a more comprehensive approach was required to make a cognizable impact on the functioning of the Panchayats for the benefit of the citizens. These recommendations formed the basis for the conceptualization of e-Panchayat MMP.

The e-Panchayat project holds great promise for the rural masses as it aims to transform the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) into symbols of modernity, transparency and efficiency. This is a one of its kind nationwide IT initiative introduced by Ministry of Panchayati Raj that endeavours to ensure people's participation in programme decision making, implementation and delivery. The project aims to automate the functioning of 2.45 lakh Panchayats in the country. The project addresses all aspects of Panchayats' functioning including Planning, Monitoring, Implementation, Budgeting, Accounting, Social Audit and delivery of citizen services like issue of certificates, licenses etc.

Objectives of The Study:

1. To Study the empowerment of PRI^r Through e-panchayats
2. To Analyse the Objectives of e-panchayat mission mode projects
3. To evaluate the Role of PRI^r in implementation of ICT

Methodology:

Present study is based on the secondary sources only A descriptive approach has been employed to deep study about e-panchayath.

Objectives of e-panchayath Misson made project:

If the Panchayats are to perform efficiently and effectively all the mandated tasks, which are increasing day by day, extensive use of information and Communication Technology (IC) is needed. Moreover, there is a strong need to build a "digital inclusive society" Where large sections of rural population are able to benefit from new technologies; can participate in the development process more effectively.

The Panchayats being at the interface of rural citizens and governance structure are an effective vehicle to induce mass ICT culture at the grassroots level. It is with this broad vision that MoPR formulated a scheme for ICT enablement of all the Panchayats in the country on a Mission Mode approach. The e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP) is intended to address all the aspects of Panchayats' functioning from internal core functions such as Decentralized Planning, Budgeting, Accounting, Implementation and monitoring etc. to service delivery like issue of certificates,

licenses etc.

Hence the key objectives of e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project are to use ICT for;

- Automation of internal workflow processes of Panchayats
- Improving delivery of services to citizen
- Capacity building of Panchayat Representatives and Officials
- Social Audit - Transparency, Accountability, Efficiency and RTI compliance of Panchayats
- Improving Governance of local self-government

The Panchayats being the basic unit for planning and implementation of a large number of schemes and services, this MMP would also go a long way in improving public service delivery through PRIs with better outcomes.

Capacity Building initiatives Under E-Panchayat MMP :

Extensive trainings are required to build the capacity at grassroots level which is an enormous challenge due to inadequate availability of necessary infrastructure. Therefore, a cascading mode of training i.e Training of the Trainers (ToT) has been adopted to create Master Trainers at State, District and Panchayat levels to ensure that trainings reach till grassroots level. The multiplier effect of ToT model offers an opportunity for informed local input in shaping the content and for facilitation of training appropriate to local culture and context.

The Ministry is providing training on Panchayat Enterprise Suite (PES) Applications and has advised the States/UTs to create a cadre of Master Trainers at State level so that they can be used to train officials at District and Panchayat level. The Ministry plans to create two Master Trainers per Application from each district in addition to 2-4 Master Trainers for each PES Application from State Panchayati Raj Department. Over 27,000 have been trained so far, To provide sustained and up-to-date training to end users, User Manuals, Frequently Asked Questions, (FAQs) and audio assisted CBTs (Computer Based Tutorial) have been made available for all PES Applications. CBTs and User Manuals have been prepared in English and are available for viewing/playing online while the users are working on the Software Applications and these can also be downloaded and played/used in off-line mode. These CBTs serve as authenticated training material, including for assisting Master Trainers during State & District level training programmes and can also be accessed by isolated users on demand. The CBTs can be used for providing continuous trainings to end users and thus are expected to expedite and improve the adoption of PES Applications. These CBTs are also enabled for translation in local languages for better absorption at local level.

On-line discussion groups (google-groups) are being used for each Application wherein users can send their queries and seek answers from MoPR, National Informatics Centre (NIC) or even from other states. These groups have been extremely effective in sharing ideas and providing immediate solutions to end users. They also serve as a knowledge database for reference as per need.

The Ministry has also made arrangements to provide basic computer training to Elected Representatives (ERs) and Panchayat Functionaries (PFs) to create awareness and basic understanding on the usage of computers. National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT). (previously DOEACC Society), has been engaged to impart these trainings at state level. The training is based on a simple syllabus including hands-on sessions for 36 hours over a six-day period. Over 19,000 ERs and PFs have been trained till date.

Process of e-governance :

The process of e-governance has already been started. The Government has decided to open one lakh common services centers across the country under National e-Government Plan (NeGP) in

order to make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man. Now the Government of India has initiated the process to equip all Gram Panchayats with computers, or provide access to computers with broadband connectivity. All Panchayats at all levels need to be equipped with computing hardware and connectivity over the next few years. The approach would be to first use the kiosks being set up under the NeGP's Common Services Centers initiative. For the remaining Panchayats, it is proposed to engage selected on the basis of a bidding process. It has been also planned to equip all Panchayats with necessary software and skills to handle e-Governance for better delivery of services to citizens.

Conclusion :

These are the comprehensive approach where central government has taken such initiatives for the Better tomorrows of entire nation. And still there are many obstacles are associated with the implementation of such actions but collective accountability and responsibilities are two better components to boost up the structural changes. In spite of all these enforcements programmes like Digital India, Start up India, Skill India, Cashless Economy are to play a crucial role in bringing such progressiveness of the Economy That to Especially for Rural Economy why because they are the matters of 68 percent population where great focus to be taken by institutionalist at large.

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