Original Research Paper　　　　　　　　**Management**

E-Governance Services: Issues & Challenges of VLES of Common Service Centers of Rayagada District of Odisha

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ABSTRACT　*The internet and information & communication technology (ICT) is ubiquitous now and after the digital India initiative taken by Government of India, the governance through electronics medium like ICTs is becoming popular day by day. To support e-governance the National e-Governance plan (NeGP) was approved by Government of India in the month of May, 2006. The sole objective was the socio-economic inclusion of rural citizens and various government bodies. For the successful operation of e-governance a multilevel hierarchy is established with defined roles and responsibilities. The NeGP has completed 10years of implementation still a rural dominated, citizen centric and huge democratic country like India has yet to see the real e-governance. At every panchayat some common service centers (CSC) or "Jana Seva Kendra" (one CSC for 5-6 villages as per NeGP) in Odisha is to be established. These CSCs are to be run by local entrepreneurs commonly known as Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) in a Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode. But the real picture is far from the reality and it is worst in remote and tribal districts of Odisha, Hence the objective of the study is to find out various issues and challenges at the ground level i.e., the difficulties faced by VLEs and some measures to improve the scenario and the case study is on the Rayagada district where 72% tribal citizens out of out of total population 84.82% are rural households (Census, 2011).*

KEYWORDS : ICT , NeGP, CSC , VLE , SDA , CSC-SPV , PPP

INTRODUCTION

Governance has been defined to refer to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity & inclusiveness, empowerment and broad based participation (UNESCO). E-governance means to achieve the above with the help of information and communication technology (ICT). India being a developing country has adopted the e-Governance after the National e-Governance plan (NeGP) which was approved in May 2006. The basic objective of NeGP was to establish the relationship between good governance and development of rural people. E-governance also improves the interaction between government and citizens and to increase the administrative effectiveness and efficiency in the internal government operations. Further, it is the application of information technology to the Government processes to bring Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent (SMART) governance (Ministry of Information Technology, 2001). The strategic objective of e-governance is to support and simplify governance for e-governance community comprised of citizens, civil society organizations, private companies, government law makers, and regulators on networks (Tapscott and Agnew, 1999). e-Governance provides up-to-date information from the government databases in a real time mode. In addition to better and fast monitoring of government tasks, e-governance generates more revenue through online delivery of services. E-Governance simply harnesses the power of ICT to provide better quality and tailored service to citizens. The government taken a three pronged approach for effective implementation of National e-governance plan to enable anytime anywhere delivery of government services(**Sahoo, D.** (2016)

The CSC Scheme, as approved by the Government of India, envisions CSCs as the front-end delivery points for Government, private and social sector services to rural citizens of India, in an integrated manner. The objective is to develop a platform that can enable Government, private and social sector organizations to align their social and commercial goals for the benefit of the rural population in the remotest corners of the country through a combination of IT-based as well as non-IT-based services.

Thus, the CSCs cannot be seen as mere service delivery points in rural India. The CSC is positioned as a Change Agent - that would promote rural entrepreneurship, build rural capacities and livelihoods, enable community participation and collective action for social change - through a bottom-up model with focus on the rural citizen.

Undertaking such a mammoth task calls for active participation and close interaction amongst various stakeholders such as State Governments, local bodies, opinion makers and agencies/ institutions involved or having interest, commercial or otherwise, in rural areas/ markets. Under the CSC Scheme, a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model has been proposed for undertaking this challenging task and addressing the related issues in the most effective way.

The VLE is the key to the success of the CSC operations. While content and services are important, it is the VLE's entrepreneurial ability that would ensure CSC sustainability. A good VLE is expected to have some financial strength, entrepreneurial ability, strong social commitment as well as respect within the community. The quality of service at the CSCs would depend a great deal on the quality of VLEs. Selection and proper training of the VLE, therefore would play a vital role in making the CSC Scheme a success.

Objectives of the present study

- The objectives of the study were to examine & identify various issues and challenges faced by the VLEs of the Rayagada District.
- To examine whether the CSC project succeeded in achieving the socio-economic development of VLEs IN Rayagada District
- To find out whether CSCs were economically viable to ensure sustainability to deliver the intended services to citizens and
- To ensure the contents developed were useful, adequate and were effectively delivered to the citizens.

Methodology:

The study makes use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data for the study were collected from both the Jana Seva Kendra users and the village level entrepreneurs (VLEs). For selecting the users for this pilot study we consider only few CSCs of Gunupur Block, primarily for the reason of its success rate i.e. 130%. We have selected randomly 30% of the CSCs at Gunupur i.e. 8 centers out of 28. Interview was the main source of collecting the primary data from both the CSC users and the VLEs. The secondary data is collected from the sources like OCAC (the SDA) and data from BASIX (the SCA for Rayagada) and various published and unpublished reports as well.

Our Findings:

Our study finds several challenges before successful working of e-governance in Odisha and especially in the tribal dominated district Rayagada.

While on one hand, the state government permitted private parties (VLEs) to establish and operate Jana Seva Kendra across the state, it is found, most of these centres who are managing lack adequate knowledge about the services provided by the district, state or central administration, and its application.

Block wise Common Services Centers rolled out in Rayagada district (Till November-2016)

Sl No	Name of the Block	No of GPs	No of Revenue Villages	No of Sanctioned CSCs	No of Operational CSCs	Success Rate(%) of Rolled out CSCs
1	Gumupur	18	129	22	28	130
2	Padmapur	13	125	21	22	106
3	Ramnaguda	12	119	20	18	91
4	Bisam Cuttack	20	308	51	22	43
5	Rayagada	28	294	49	21	43
6	Kolnara	15	199	33	14	42
7	Muniguda	16	416	69	28	40
8	Gudari	9	159	27	10	38
9	Kalyansinghpur	13	254	42	13	31
10	Kashipur	20	449	75	17	23
11	Chandrapur	7	219	37	0	0
	Total	171	2671	445	193	43

Graph: 01

Success rate of Rolled out CSCs at Rayagada District Block wise till November-2016
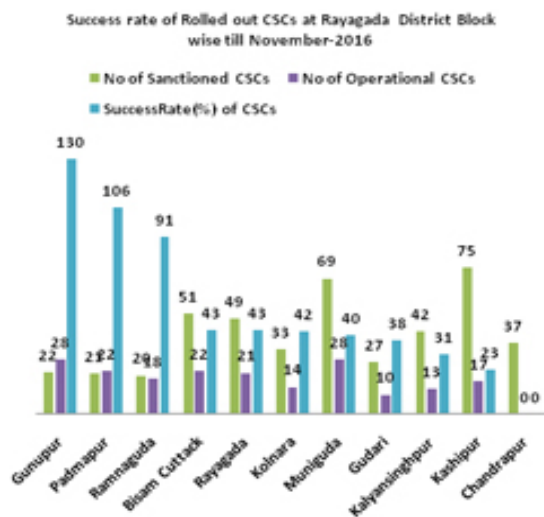
- The VLEs, who are establishing these Jana Seva Kendra are engaging non-technical persons with low knowledge about the background of e-services and it s benefits. They often lack in understanding the spirit of citizen centric services.
- The power and internet connectivity in the remote places are highly miserable, and thereby people lose their interest running after the centres, and go to urban places for such services.
- When we refer the table no-1 and subsequently the bar graph drawn out of the data in graph no-1 we could draw many conclusions
- Blocks like Gunupur, Padmapur and Ramnaguda have achieved near 100% or even more than that, the reason being the awareness about the services of CSCs.
- VLEs in many blocks like Gudari, Kalyansinghpur and Kasipur are not interested due to less return on investment.
- Block like Chandrapur has not yet a single CSC due the threat of Maoist activities.
- The service delivery through e-panchayat is replication of work, as it would create a service delivery network parallel to the CSCs (Meena Chaturvedi, CEO, SREI SAHAJ e-Village). This is one serious threat to the implementation of CSCs.
- The very purpose of opening and offering services for the ultimate benefit of the citizens often getting disrupted for former reasons, and there is no specific accountability or mechanism devised to control and regulates their functioning at district or state level.
- After analyzing all the above findings, we are categorizing the challenges into major and Minor challenges and some of them are as follows.

Major challenges:
- Delay in deployment of G2C services.
- Inadequate capacity building effort
- Inconsistent Internet connectivity and electricity supply
- Insufficient contents in regional languages
- Insufficient back end computerization in government departments.
- Lack of awareness about ICT and CSC project
- Lack of entrepreneurship in VLEs.

Minor challenges:
- Suitable place selection for CSC and population in the catchment area of CSC
- Inappropriate monitoring system for VLEs
- Lack of credibility of VLEs in local rural community due to inconsistent service delivery.
- Maintenance of computers and other hardware equipments in remote area.

Hence the major issues and challenges for faster growth of CSCs, economic stability of VLEs, return on investment of SCAs and the satisfaction of citizens at large to be achieved by focusing carefully on the following factors like

- To keep the huge infrastructure of SWANs fault tolerant.
- To cope up with the power cuts in the rural areas, which are sometimes up to 8-10 hours a day.
- To keep providing new services; to keep abreast with the advancement in technology.
- To help rural population to increase their per capita income through CSCs to ensure sustainability of the system.
- Integration with the new services, departments and ensuring proper interoperability between different departments.
- Ensuring consistency of data.
- Ensuring updated data availability
- Provide adequate physical security and authentication controls in the IT audit.
- User account management system, network security, preventing unauthorized access to the database servers
- The Data transmission should be in proper encrypted form

Conclusion :
The study says the successful rolled out CSCs in Rayagada district is only 43% in last 10 years. To overcome the challenge to implement the initiative taken by Government of India to implement NeGP we need to have these three Powers

1. Will Power: There must be strong will, support and dedication from all the stakeholders not only till implementation but also in day to day operation.
2. Man Power: For proper implementation and functioning of the system well trained and skilled manpower has to be in place all over the country.
3. Electric Power: To keep the implemented

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