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E-GOVERNANCE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Information and Communication Technologies play an important role in rural development.Connectivity is vital in business and society in India. There is rapid growth in information technology related business in India. But only a meagre percentage of Indians have internet connection at their residence.The Empowerment of rural communities is crucial for the development of the rural region. Bringing the people in the rural region in the mainstream of the digital technologies to access and adopt modern technologies is a major concern now. Rural Development implies both, the economic development of the people and greater social transformation using electronic governance (e-governance). In order to provide the rural people in Maharashtra with better prospects and opportunities for economic development, agricultural development and management, marketing management, increased participation of rural people in usage and adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is envisaged. This paper aims to explore the nature, role and relevance of the Electronic/Digital Governance using ICTs and wireless technologies for agriculture and rural development in the rural regions. It also aims to study the impact of e-governance on rural development and methods for improving local environmental governance having regard particularly to the range of interests and actors involved in e-governance.

KEYWORDS: *Information and Communication Technologies , business and society.*

INTRODUCTION

The Empowerment of Rural communities is crucial for the development of the rural India. Brining the rural people in to the mainstream of the digital technologies for the agriculture and rural development is a major concern now. The Information and Communication Technologies plays an important role in agriculture and rural development. Rural Development implies both, the economic development of the people and greater social transformation using electronic governance. In order to provide the rural people with better prospects and opportunities for economic development,

agriculture development and management, Agriculture marketing management; increased participation of farmers in electronic governance through information and communication technologies are envisaged.

Information and communication technologies are viewed as an efficient tool for information delivering to the rural community including farmers in India. The E- Governance and wireless communication technologies can be used for empowering the farming communities and rural communities for economic development of rural region. The farmers can get the agriculture marketing information through E-Governance. The wireless communications can be used not only for the decision making in agriculture such as selection of crops, fertilizers, water requirement etc but also for different agriculture services such as harvesting, marketing, processing etc. The application of E-Governance in agriculture sector is also helpful in management of data base of agriculture labours, health of farmer and laboursetc.The rural areas are vulnerable to climate change affecting the agriculture production. The assessing and mitigating of impacts of climate change is crucial for agriculture development. The Information and Communication Technologies, Wireless Technologies and E-governance plays an important role agriculture development, management and climate change information delivery system in rural region. The use of e-governance is very effective for the management of agriculture and the database for the agriculture industries .In order to provide better information and communication to the people in rural and remote places in India. wireless technology can be effectively used during the disasters such as floods, land burst, heavy rain fall, electricity failure , water supply in irrigation canals and water level in dams , health of agriculture labours etc and The fishermen communities can get the updated weather information and the fishery date through use of the internet, e-governance and wireless technologies .During the cyclone in rural region the internetalong with information and communication technologies with application of e-governance and wireless communication found suitable and most effective technology to save human life and economic loss in agriculture sector .

E-GOVERNANCE

E-governance is a way of managing governmentelectronically. With the introduction of information andcommunication technology e-governance has grown leapand bounds. In developed countries like USA, UK, Chinaetc. the e-governance was initiated way back and now it isvery well developed. But in developing countries it is stillin growing phase. E-governance is a means by which thewhole way of interaction between the citizen and thegovernment changes, thus changing the manner ofgovernance for better. In fact the motto behind E-governanceis to provide SMART (Simple, Moral,Accountable, Responsible and Transparent) government.E-governance not only includes electronic interaction andexchange of information between the citizen andgovernment but also exchange of information between thegovernments (i.e. government to government). The ultimategoal of any government is to provide services to citizen forbetter and smooth conduct of administrative operations. Infact e-governance makes government more usercentred.According to the World Bank :“E-Government refers to the use by government agenciesof information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks,the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability totransform relations with citizens, businesses, and other armsof government. These technologies can serve a variety ofdifferent ends: better delivery of government services tocitizens,improved interactions with business and industry,citizen empowerment through access to information, ormore efficient government management.

The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency,greater convenience, revenue growth, and/ or costreductions.”United Nations (AOEMA report):“E-government is defined as utilizing the Internet and theworld-wide-web for delivering government information andservices to citizens.”Ravi Kant (Special Secretary, IT, Govt. of West Bengal):"e-governance, however, is not really the use of IT ingovernance but as a tool to ensure good governance. E-governancedoes not mean proliferation of computers andaccessories; it is basically a political decision which callsfor discipline, attitudinal change in officers and employees,and massive government process re-engineering."Advantages of e-governance are that it is convenient,efficient, transparent, accountable, paperless, cost saving,connects users and government and also provides easyaccess to users online.

ICT & GOVERNANCE

Information Communication Technologies (ICT) can be defined as "electronic means ofcapturing, processing, storing and communicating information. ICT may be computerhardware, software and networks. They also include intermediate technologies likeradio and television, literate technologies like books and newspapers and organictechnologies based on human body like brain and sound waves" (Heeks, 2002). ICT is anessential for required development in rural area because whenever any governmentservices comes in to our mind automatically we think of long queue, several visits togovernment offices and also sometimes "extra fees" for completion of task. Beingdeveloping country, India is in need of radical change in governance and this can only beachieved by reengineering existing governance process with the help of ICT. ICTapplications can enhance poor people's opportunities by improving their access tomarkets, health, and education. Furthermore, ICT can empower the poor by expandingthe use of government services, and reduce risks by widening access to micro finance(Cecchini and Scott, 2003). The uses of ICT can lead the nation to overall economicsustainable development.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT & GOVERNANCE

In the rural context, development does not mean the urbanization of far areas but it alsoinvolved optimum utilization of use of men (human resource), machine (technology),land (natural resource) and for sustainable economic growth and social development ofthe rural economies. The term rural development also represents improvement inquality of life of rural people in villages. As per Chambers (1983) "Rural Development isa strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain forthemselves and their children more of what they want and need." India is a developingcountry where still we have number of villages where basic infrastructure is awaited.For them government is armed with many E-governance projects to improve their livingstandard. "Sustainable Rural Development can make a powerful contribution to fourcritical goals of: poverty reduction, wider shared growth, household, national, and globalfood security and sustainable natural resource management" (World Bank, 1997).Globally all countries are focusing more on rural development. Any improvement, in thesocial or economic status of rural areas would not just directly benefit rural poor butwould also bring down the migration-pressures on cities and contribute by positiveripple effect in global stride towards development.

E-GOVERNANCE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

India is a country of villages and to improve and sustain the overall prosperity, growth anddevelopment in the global competitive regime, Government has introduced National E-governance plan (NeGp)that seeks to lay the foundation with various projects, starting from the grass-root levels, and provide impetusfor long-term e-governance within the country. In this direction rural e-Governance applications implementedin the recent few years have been demonstrating the importance of Information and CommunicationTechnologies (ICT) in the concerned areas of rural development. Indeed, some of the schemes introduced inrural India have improved the government services immensely. At the national level E-governance projects likeSate Wide Area Network (SWAN), Management Information System (MIS) on Mahatma Gandhi National RuralEmployment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Online Income Tax, Online Central Excise, Unique ID and E-office hasaccelerated growth of respective areas and contributing to country's economic development. Similarly, at statelevel the various rural E-governance projects such as Bhoomi Project, SamanyaMahiti in Karnataka; AkshayaProject in Kerala; SETU Project in Maharashtra; Gyanganga, Swagat, Mahiti Shakti in Gujarat; Online LandRecords in Tamilnadu; E-seva, Online Complaint Registration, Prajavani in Andhra Pradesh; e-Gazette in Biharand Information Village Research Project in Pondicherry, etc. are some of the important projects that havebeen providing excellent services and saving time and money of people as well as of government and arecontributing their might to the socio-economic development of rural India.

The use of Information and Communication Technology in governance processes and bygovernments has been mostly centered in the deployment of ICT applications and solutions tostreamline

government's operations reduce transactional costs, and increase transparency andaccountability of public institutions. E-government or online government has indeed taken offsince the end of the millennium. 'Modernization' of public state institutions complemented by thedelivery of specific government services has thus been the cornerstone of this approach. As amatter of fact, many developing countries have complemented existing national ICT strategieswith e-government policies and/or ad hoc deployment of solutions for specific national sectors.The latest trend on e-government, in response in part to the many failures of many of relatedinitiatives, suggests a more citizen-centric approach in which E-government priorities are muchmore responsive to citizen's needs and development agendas. Rural e-Governance applications inthe recent past have demonstrated the important role the Information and CommunicationTechnologies (ICT) play in the realm of rural development. Several e-Governance projects haveattempted to improve the reach, enhance the base, minimize the processing costs, increasetransparency, and reduce the cycle times. Several states have initiated the creation of State WideArea Networks (SWAN) to facilitate electronic access of the state and district administrationservices to the citizens in villages. The significant efforts are required to design, develop andinternalize the ICT solutions through well managed reengineering of back-end processes andcapacity building efforts to ensure sustainability. Suitable public private partnership modelshave to be adopted to ensure rapid.

IMPACT OF E-GOVERNANCE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

India is a nation of villages. The rural mass in thenation comprises the core of Indian society and alsorepresents the real India. According to the Census Data2001, there are 638,387 villages in India that representmore than 72 per cent of the total population. Sodevelopment of these rural mass is one of the key areas ofconsideration in the government policy formulation, whichis concerned with economic growth and social justice,improvement in the living standard of the rural people byproviding adequate and quality social services andminimum basic needs becomes essential. The presentstrategy of rural development mainly focuses on povertyalleviation, better livelihood opportunities, provision ofbasic amenities and infrastructure facilities throughinnovative programmes of wage and self-employmentetc.The government of India has started many programmesaimed at improving the standard of living in villages orrural areas. To build rural infrastructure, the governmentlaunched a time-bound business plan for action calledBharat Nigam in 2005. Under Bharat Nirman, action isproposed in the areas of Water Supply, Housing,Telecommunication and Information Technology, Roads,Electrification and Irrigation. In view of the sheer size anddiversity of our country, delivery of governance to theremote corners in a meaningful and locally relevant manner is a huge challenge. The administrative setup has evolvedby incorporating our age old institutions with the moderndemocratic organs to meet this challenge. To make thischallenge easy Panchayat Raj came into existence.Panchayats have historically been an integral part of rurallife in India, and the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act,1992 has institutionalised the Panchayati Raj at the Village,Intermediate and the District levels, as the third tier ofgovernance. In May 2004, the Ministry of Panchayati Rajwas formed as the Nodal agency looking after theempowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the country.

The use of information - communication technology hasmade this challenge more convenient.

E-GOVERNANCE IN RURAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

There have been several initiatives by the State and Central Governments to meet the various challenges facing the agriculture sector in the country. The Agriculture MMP has been included in NeGP in an effort to consolidate the various learning from the past, integrate all the diverse and disparate efforts currently underway, and upscale them to cover the entire country. The online services include up to the Panchayat level.The major e-Governance initiatives in Agriculture sector are:

- RashtriyaKrishiVikasYojana (RKVY)
- Information to farmers on Government Programmes and Schemes
- Agricultural Marketing Information NetworkAgriculture Credit
- Agriculture Marketing

- Drought Management
- Macro Management Unit
- Networking of Directorates and Field Units
- Seeds
- Kisan Call Center
- Agricultural Census
- Registration of Pesticides
- Integrated Nutrient Management
- Rain fed Farming System
- Cooperation
- Horticulture Development

CONCLUSION

The use of ICT tools help in strengthening social networks, empowerment and participation, as well as fostering productive processes at the local level through the provision of employment and skills, as well as support services for micro-enterprise activities. In rural communities of developing countries, with limited capacities and resources to respond to the effects of extreme natural hazards, drought, landslides, floods, and to the impacts of these events on local social systems (e.g. health, infrastructure, transportation, migration), ICT tools are emerging as an area of increasing interest. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) play in the realm of ruraldevelopment. Several e-Governance projects have attempted to improve the reach, enhancethe base, minimize the processing costs, increase transparency, and reduce the cycle times.Several states have initiated the creation of State Wide Area Networks (SWAN) to facilitateelectronic access of the state and district administration services to the citizens in villages.Studies and experiences of Center for Electronic Governance at Indian Institute ofManagement, Ahmedabad (CEG-IIMA) indicate that significant efforts are required todesign, develop and internalize the ICT solutions through well managed reengineering ofback-end processes and capacity building efforts to ensure sustainability. Suitable publicprivatepartnership models have to be adopted to ensure rapid development and costeffectivesolutions. This paper presents a brief review of the technologies, the rural ICTprojects and the issues associated with the use of ICT for rural e-Governance applications.

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