PROBLEMS & PROSPECTS OF RURAL DIGITALISATION

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Abstract: Digitalisation of India, A welcome move! The Digital India programme launched by Indian Government is a much needed initiative that will help bridge the digital divide between Urban and Rural India and empower citizens. It aims to connect Grampanchayat by Broadband internet, promote E-Governance and transform India into a connected knowledge economy. Digital India is the beginning of digital revolution. It is a dream which is created by the Government of India to ensure that government services are made available to citizens electronically, even in remote areas, by improving online infrastructure and by increasing Internet connectivity. The programmes have one mission and one target that is to take nation forward digitally and economically. The initiative will enable people to get engaged in the innovation process which is needed by the economy to move forward. But to implement this is a great challenge. There are many roadblocks in the way of its successful implementation like digital illiteracy ,poor infrastructure, low internet speed, lack of coordination among various departments, issue pertaining to taxation etc This paper will discuss the extent to which Rural people has been uplifted from this programme. It describes the challenges faced by Rural India while implementation of Digital India Programme.

Keywords: Digital India, e-Governance, Internet, Rural Empowerment, Digitalisation, E-literacy

Introduction

Digital India is a large umbrella national programme that focuses at providing universal digital literacy and universal accessibility of all digital resources for citizens. The vision is centered on three key areas: creation of digital infrastructure, delivery of governance and services on demand, and digital empowerment of citizens. Digital India program will focus on restructuring several existing schemes to bring in a transformational impact. The vision of the programme aims to transform India into a digitally-empowered society and knowledge economy through infrastructural reforms such as high-speed internet in all gram panchayats, lifelong digital identification for citizens, mobile banking for all, easy access to Common Service Centres (CSC), shareable private spaces on an easily accessible public Cloud and cyber-security. The programme will also ensure that all government services and information are available anywhere, anytime, on any device that is easy-to-use, seamless, highly-available and secured. It is one of the steps by the government to motivate and connect Indian Economy to a knowledge savvy world. Today, the world has transformed from a knowledge savvy to techno knowledge savvy. Think of something and it is available in one click. So, Digital India is a step by the government to inspire and connect Indian Economy to such a knowledge savvy world. The program targets to make Government services available to people digitally and enjoy the benefit of the newest information and technological innovations. It brings out various schemes like E-Health, Digital Locker, E-Sign, E- Education etc. and nationwide scholarship portal. The program strives to provide equal benefit to the user and service provider. The consumers will be benefited by way of saving time, money, physical & cognitive energy spent in lengthy government processes. The Digital India Programme has been launched with an aim of transforming the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The Digital India would ensure that Government services are available to citizens electronically. It would also bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of government's services electronically; a Unique ID and E-Pramaan based on authentic and standard based interoperable and integrated government applications and data basis.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the digitalization concept in Rural India.
2. To discuss the various schemes launched by the Government regarding Digital India.
3. To know the extent to which rural people has been uplifted from this programme.
4. To enumerate the major obstacles being faced by the rural people while implementing Digital India.

Data Collection

The Secondary Data has been used in this paper and information has been taken from the internet via journals, newspapers and research papers.

Digital India Programme is conceptualized on The Nine Support Beams. These Are:

   I. Broadband Highways: Web based portals and Mobile apps will be developed to access online information while on the move. High speed broadband highways will be provided through fiber optics that connects all the remote areas, government departments, universities, R&D etc.

  II. Universal Mobile Access: With Digital India programme nation is ready to be well-connected, efficient, and more productive in every aspect. Network technologies like 3G, 4G and upcoming 5G will storm the speed.

 III. Public Internet Access: The two sub components of Public Internet Access Programme are Common Service Centers and Post Offices as multi-service centers. CSCs would be made viable and multi-functional end-points for delivery of government and business services. Deity would be the nodal department to implement the scheme. Post Offices are proposed to be converted into multi service centers.

 IV. E-Governance: This governance will transform every manual work into fully automation system. It will revolutionize the system in the following ways: Online access to applications i.e. availability of all databases and information in electronic format. Effortlessly tracking

of assignments. Interface between departments for superior production of work. Quickly respond, analyze and resolve persistent problems and many more.

V. E-Kranti: This e-kranti will fully focus on digital knowledge program where education, health, farming, rights, financial and many more services will be delivered on a very high bandwidth. Physical boundaries no longer are a limitation when almost everyone and everything is a digital handshake away.

VI. Electronics Manufacturing: This milestone will create a huge base for electronics manufacturing in India with the aid of digital technologies and skills. The empowerment of manufacturing through the Internet of Things will enable intelligent workshops that demonstrate data driven operational excellence and decentralized production control systems within and beyond the physical factory walls.

VII. IT for Jobs: The government is preparing to provide training and teaching skills to the youth for employment opportunities in the IT sector.

VIII. Early Harvest: The govt. is planning to set up Aadhaar Allowed Fingerprint Presence Program in all central government workplaces situated at Delhi. A web based application software system will allow online documenting of attendance and its watching by the involved stakeholders.

IX. Information for All: Websites and mobile apps will convey data and realistic participation and through social media. Everything is connected through virtual networks. Swift work flow and no delays due to wait in queues.

Benefits of Digital Programme

- It makes possible the implementation of digital locker system which in turn reduces paper work by minimizing the usage of physical documents as well as enabling e-sharing through registered repositories
- It ensures the achievement of various online goals set by the government.
- It makes possible for people to submit their documents and certificates online anywhere which reduces physical work.
- Citizens may digitally sign their documents online through e-Sign framework
- It will ease the important health care services through e-Hospital system such as online registration, taking doctor appointments, fee payment, online diagnostic tests, blood check-up, etc.
- It provides benefits to the beneficiaries through National Scholarship Portal by allowing submission of application, verification process, sanction and then disbursal
- It is a huge platform which facilitates an efficient delivery of government or private services all over the country to its citizens.
- Bharat Net programe (a high-speed digital highway) will connect almost 250,000 gram panchayats of country.
- There is a plan of outsourcing policy also to help in the digital India initiative.
- For better management of online services on mobile such as voice, data, multimedia, etc, BSNL's Next Generation Network will replace 30-year old telephone exchange.

Digital India Programme and Indian Rural Sector

The vision of Digital India National programme is path breaking and has the potential for transformational changes and upliftment of rural sector of India. The plan to provide universal phone connectivity and access to broadband in 2.5 lakh villages by 2019 is going to give a boost to the rural market. Setting up manufacturing facility in India to produce large scale low cost devices, the proposal of shared use of mobile devices by families in rural markets, sharing of infrastructure cost by mobile service providers and government offering to subsidise the roll out cost of mobile services are examples of increasing the speed of providing such services within the reach of villages. Several apps have been launched to enable farmers get accurate and timely information related to crops, market prices and analytics to enhance productivity and profitability of farmers. The digital platform will open a new era for rural citizens through a variety of services like improved governance, land records, jobs, health, education and agriculture and digitization of personal and public records for safekeeping.

World's largest software maker Microsoft Corp has joined hands with the Indian Government for providing help in efforts to "transform" the country through technological innovations.

Intel India has also announced the launch of *'EkKadamUnnati Ki Aur'*, an initiative aimed at working with the government to create the blueprint for the digitization of rural India. The first such Digital India 'Unnati' Kendra has been set up at a Common Services Center (CSC) in Nadimpalle village of Mahabubnagar district of Telangana.

Empowerment of Rural Entrepreneurs under Digital India

Digital India programme has launched many schemes that focus on the empowerment of rural entrepreneurs of India.

One of such schemes is enhancing Rural Entrepreneurship through Common Services Centres (CSCs).Rural entrepreneurs can get loan for setting up their CSCs under the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) Yojana. CSCs are information and communications technology enabled service delivery points at the village level for delivery of government, financial, social and private services such as applying online passports, land record, digital locker and Aadhaar cards. Those who want to start such service points but do not have funds can start their micro-ventures by taking loans under MUDRA Yojana

Another scheme for promoting rural entrepreneurship under Digital India Programme is through Internet Kiosks. Internet Kiosk is a kiosk with one or more computers, a tablet, Internet connection, with a web cam that can be the set up in villages to be used as the hub of rural connectivity for providing education and training, information about agriculture and health care, employment news and market information. These cyber-kiosks can be run by local entrepreneurs thereby empowering the rural entrepreneurship.

Digital India and Empowerment of Rural Indian Women

Empowerment of women of a nation leads to the successful growth and development of a nation. Digital India Programme has set the stage for empowering the Rural Indian Women. Following are some of the steps taken by Indian Government under Digital India programme for empowering rural women:

ArogyaSakhi helps rural women developing their own personality in order to providing health care to the rural area. It's a mobile application that helps rural women entrepreneurs deliver preventive health care at rural doorsteps. Women armed with tablets and mobile healthcare devices like glucometers, blood pressure checking machine visit homes and collect data from the village women. This data can be accessed by doctors at any location who could provide treatment to the patients remotely.

Internet Saathi aims to go deep with the internet usage among rural women in India. Ratan Tata has joined hands with Google and Intel to help women in rural India to access the internet in large number. The three-way project Internet Saathi will deploy 1000 specially designed bicycles with connected devices to give villagers an altogether new internet experience.

The Amakomaya Project (Nepal) aims at of providing Nepali rural women with lifesaving digital content in their own local language via the Internet. It serves a social cause which is to providing pregnant women during and after pregnancy advices. By this way, it helps reducing population and diseases in new born children. With the high mobile tapping, the program has expanded with a mobile platform, and it also connects rural health workers with urban based hospital doctors.

W2E2 (India) Women for Empowerment and Entrepreneurship, in short W2E2 is helping rural women with digital tools, e-learning, internet connection. Women tend to use the Internet for their own projects in fields like sustainable agriculture and rural health. Some are setting up their own kiosks and shops to provide online services to the local community, while others have taken up work as digital literacy trainers in their own local communities.

Barriers

Digital India is a great plan but its improper implementation due to inaccessibility & inflexibility to requisite can lead to its failure. There are few Barriers of the Digital India programme which are as follows

1) Infrastructure deficit such as lack of towers, especially in the country side.
2) Implementing entities at the actual field.
3) Beneficiaries may not have adequate knowledge of DIP.
4) Auxiliary services such as health, education, banking, governance etc may not be well developed.
5) No separate entity for consumer readdress under the program.
6) Computer Literacy and awareness is low as compare with urban population.

Conclusion

The vision of digital India is grand. It is a huge step towards building a truly empowered nation. If successful, it transforms citizen access to multimedia information, content and services. However the goal is still far away since most of the nine pillars of digital India mission are facing serious challenges in implementation Online connections will be effective if there are other infrastructure development as well as in rural side including electricity and buildings which will not go under the water during floods. Interestingly, a patient in a village avail the services of a medical specialist from anywhere in India. But whether prescribed medicines will be available or not, yet a holistic approach can be overemphasized. Because Digital India cannot takeoff without high speed internet connection using mobile phones and bank accounts to make services available. The entire phenomenon of smart phones and e-commerce is still a largely urban a fire. Thus far villages acquainting with gadgets and facilities will certainly take place some time. But it is good that a beginning has been made.

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