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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Implementation of E- Governance Services for Rural Development of North East India.**Ranjit Bikash Chetia.**

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E-Governance or Digital Governance is the use of information and communication Technology to facilitate the Government system. It can be carried out through the using of e-mail, web-publishing, promoting citizens access etc. Developments in e-governance provide opportunities to harness the power of Information Technology (IT) to make the business of governance inexpensive, qualitatively responsive, and truly encompassing. . Therefore Electronic Governance (e-Governance) has received a tremendous interest world over.

The induction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Governance has been more or less unorganized in Northeast region in its initial periods. The process was initiated by NIC (National Informatics Centre), which is one of the leading e- governance institutions of India. NIC established its center (which is known as Assam State Centre of National Informatics Centre) at guwahati in 1986. It was aiming at developing ICT (Information and Communication Technology) based Infrastructure, ICT based Information system and ICT capacity building particularly in the rural areas, of this region. NIC began setting up district units from 1990 onwards and now NIC has its districts units in almost all the 27 districts of the state. The services rendered by NIC in rural areas are- Maintenance of infrastructure, wider transparency in government functions, providing information and communication technology support to the officials of the districts and local level authorities, development and implementation of all state and district level computerization projects, monitoring district administration sponsored projects. The Community Information Centers (CIC) established by NIC in various Blocks, are used by the local people to access information, email training on computer and Internet. It imparting IT training programme for - students, staff of the Block Development Offices, Elected representatives of 3 tier Panchayati Raj institutions and common people in rural area etc. The Community Information Centers also offered services like Exam results, farmers tips, tender notices, job advertisement, education notification and so on. At present all the Northeastern states have these centers. Arunachal Pradesh Community Information Centre even able to render its services in the most interior places. Under the patronage of Department of Information Technology, Government of India these centers play the very the curtail role in Rural development process. NIC sponsored "Computerized Rural Information Systems Projects (CRISP)" for all over India has to make its mark in this region. The Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, monitors these. The aim of this programme was to facilitate the monitoring and planning exercises of Department of Rural Development Agency (DRDA) s, State Rural Development Department (SRD) s and the Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) in the area of poverty alleviation. It is later known as RuralSoft which enables data to be captures either at DRDA level or Block level, depending on the availability of computing and communication infrastructure at these levels. Certain other programmes like Dharitee (in Assam), E-MODOP (in Nagaland), E-Subidha (in Assam, Tripura) has gain popularity. Adding to this even Private institute like ICICI bank take the initiatives for Micro Banking (for Agricultural and Business purposes) in Rural Areas since

2003. Presently there are a number of Common Service Centers (CSC) available in this region; which promotes rural livelihood through Technology and financial inputs. It also helps in opening of bank accounts, for people of BPL, and small marginal farmers. The CSC is acted as a platform for promoting rural entrepreneurship and assist rural farmers and artisans to connect to the market. Likewise in Mizoram Government taking all the initiatives to implement the “National e-Governance Programme (NeGP)”.

As once Rural India’s institutional Infrastructure is woefully inadequate, it is hope that ICT will help manage rural India’s social, political and administrative challenges and become a viable technology for the provision of health, education and other social services. A closer look on the entire scenario make us to believe that over the past few years, a number of information systems have been developed and made operational in the Rural Development domain of North East and it is a fact that majority of these solutions have been developed by NIC. There is much more scope for other institutions if they want to invest or exercise their potentiality in this region. The NGOs, the private sector and other government entities should put forward their steps towards this direction. So, expectations are there.

However, though E-Governance receive highest level of popularity in rural life, governments yet have not done enough to look at how Information Technology can address the needs of the poor in general and poor women in particular, towards economic and social empowerment. The Ground-level evidence reflects attention primarily to the urban-rural divide, and inadequate focus to the concerns of the illiterate, of marginal farmers, and women. That’s why the question of Equity comes before implementation of every E-Governance programme. Besides these, poor infrastructure, high deployment and maintenance costs of the ICT infrastructure and prolonged Cultural Barriers most often restricts the mobility of E-Governance in rural areas. Over the past three decades a wide range of e-governance projects are being implemented in different parts of the country including projects aimed at reaching areas and people that had traditionally not been connected to the outside world. E-governance is truly allowing citizens to participate in the government decision-making process, reflect their true needs and welfare by utilizing e-government as a tool. E-governance must be a high priority for India, as it is the only means of taking IT to the masses .It is hope that in near future E-Governance can make governance more efficient and more effective, and bring other benefits too.

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