

IMPORTANCE OF ICT IN THE CHANGING SCENARIO OF RURAL INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Era of information technology begun from 1990 is now playing a important role in the development of our country. ICT has emerged as a new way of reaching out to the people at the grass root level. In recent year information and communication technologies have been deployed in various initiatives in rural communities in the country. India using information and communication technologies to promote their development programs as well as reaches the poor to strengthen their livelihood. The present ICT initiatives generally focus on development of infrastructure and the progression of information and communication projects from the centre to the remote areas of the country. ICT plays an important role in spreading information and knowledge among rural communities in the area such as agriculture, health, governance, financial services, education and employment. Government, NGO and corporate bodies have tried many experimentation with various ICTs and its application for the development of rural communities. This paper discusses the importance of information and communication technologies in the development of rural communities in India. It also analyses the components preventing rural community from reaping the benefits of ICT.

Definition of ICT

ICT (information and communications technology - or technologies) is a broad term which means any communication tool, like- mobile phones TV, transistor, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems etc. as well as the other services and applications related with them, likes of videoconferencing and programs of distance learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

The present study is analytical in nature and comprises secondary data which is collected from books, periodicals, journals and news papers. Information has also been taken from the websites.

Objectives of the Study:

This study plans to study the importance of information and communication technologies in the changing scenario of rural India. It also analyses the components preventing rural communities from the reaping the benefits of ICT.

In July 2018, about 4.1 billion people were active internet users in the world. The number of internet users in China has increased to 800 million in 2018. Today around 50 percent population of the world has connectivity from internet. Just few years from now in the year 1995, it was less than a percent. The number of Internet users has increased many folds from the year 1999 to 2018 in India. The number of internet users in India has increased to 500 million in 2018. At the end of December 2017, India had 331.77 million internet users, growing 11.34 percent from 2016. According to the findings of the report (IAMAI), urban India witnessed growth of 9.66 percent from December 2016. On the other hand, rural India, witnessed growth of 14.11 percent from December 2016. Despite the large number of internet users in India, only 26 percent of the Indian population accessed the internet in 2015. It was only 10 percent in 2011. As per data released by TRAI, the number of internet users in India is supposed to reach the figure of 700 million in 2019.

Revealed by the census of 2011, the census covered 246.7 million households in the country and found only 3.1% houses use with internet facility. The Internet includes both broadband and low-speed connections. The report disclosed that Only single state and two small union territory in the country has the density of internet over 10%. The union territory Chandigarh (U/T) has the highest internet users (18.8%), Next to that is NCR of Delhi with 17.6% internet users and small state like Goa has 12.7% internet users.

The state of Bihar has less than 1% of internet users in the total households also the lowest in the country. The data from other states are also not very exciting as Maharashtra has 5.8% internet users, Uttar Pradesh has 1.9% internet users and West Bengal has 2.2% of total households has Internet facility.

The benefits of the ICT on Rural Community development aspects are:

- It has multiplied their abilities to process all types of information accurately and with fast speed.
- Effective communication
- Entertainment
- It provides information on crop production, crop management, soil and market prices.
- The community need information on agriculture, disease control and pasture management, information concerning bee keeping, weather forecast, marketing strategies,

financial opportunities, planning and learning from successful stories. This is possible with ICT.

- Improvement in Education and Research
- Easier whether forecasting and announcement
- More Business opportunities
- Open access of the knowledge
- Easier to communicate the changes in technologies
- new developments in agricultural sector
- Strengthening the production
- increased market coordination
- Rural livelihood
- Online shopping, billing and selling
- Quick Disaster relief
- Health related information and knowledge
- Easier communication world wide
- More economic empowerment
- Increased opportunities
- Diverse area of Entrepreneurship
- Improved quality life and better interaction opportunities for disadvantaged group
- Direct communication becomes possible between rural people and government officers
- Increased accountability and transparency
- Computerization of Land Records-
 - Creating database of basic records
 - Facilitating the issues of copies of records
 - Reducing work load by elimination of drudgery of paper work

- Minimizing the possibilities manipulation of land records, and
- Creating a land management information system

The fundamental challenges that ICT for rural development facing are mentioned below:

- Lack of awareness about benefits of ICTs.
- Non-availability of government information through online.
- Lack of motivation.
- Illiteracy spread over vast population of rural india.
- Major power-cuts and 'brown-outs' affecting the country-side ranging from 5 to 12 hours every day. Even though uninterrupted power supply systems are used; yet they prove insufficient to cope up with the power breakdowns
- Serious band-width issues and connectivity problems. Even though technology is available to upgrade the band-width; not enough resources have been budgeted by the Government to change this scenario. However once a few projects for the up gradation of the band-width on the anvil get commissioned, there should be a significant improvement in the connectivity
- Financing difficulties encountered by the local grass root level institutions as well as by the state governments. Immediate response are required to promote funds for the development of information and communication technology in the country especially for the rural area; with the participation of private partners and by meeting out the shortage of professional leaders and guides who could ensure implementation of the ICTs at the grass root levels. Unfortunately most professionals want to work in the urban areas where there are ample opportunities available to them for growth as well as prosperity. In the absence of these 'techno-catalytic' resources; development of ICTs in the rural areas will always be very slow.

CONCLUSION

The analysis shows that several ICT based activities have taken place over the last decade. With the help of Information Technology, it has become possible for common man to access global information. Information and Communication Technology has great relevance in today's world. ICT can be power techniques of community development. If we apply with full potential ICT can definitely bridge the gulf between economically weaker and technologically backward and economically strong and forward masses. With the IT boom in India technology is easily accessible to the government machineries with relevantly cheaper and convenient manner.

Organized training and proper implementation of ICT enabled programs with a language that can easily understandable by the rural masses can definitely bring positive change in the field of rural development in India.

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