DIGITAL RURAL INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

A large population of India resides in the rural areas. The key strategies of the government for rural development have always focused on poverty alleviation, better livelihood opportunities, provision of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities through innovative programme of wage and self employment. The Government of India launched the 'Digital India' Programme in 2015 with the vision of transforming the country into digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The programme focuses on access to high speed internet as a core utility for all Gram Panchayats, Unique, lifelong, online and authenticable digital identity, mobile phone and bank account to enable participation in digital and financial space at the individual level. Various digital platforms are now serving as information sources eg. Kisan Call Centres, National Agriculture Market (e-Nam) etc. This paper highlights the overview of Digital Rural India.

Keywords: - Digital India, IT, Rural, e-Government, CSCs.

INTRODUCTION:

There are about 6.5 lakhs of villages in India that represent more than 72 percent of the total population. The rural mass in the nation comprises the core of Indian society and also represents the real India. In order to develop these rural mass, Government of India has initiated various economic and social policy. The key strategy of rural development mainly focuses on poverty alleviation, better livelihood opportunities, provision of basic amentias and infrastructure facilities through innovative programmes of wages and self employment etc. For such development need was felt to improve the overall trust relationship between the Government and citizens. It was realized that the challenges like poor public services, unemployment, housing, crime and violence, health, education for all etc. could be successfully addressed through extensive use of Information & Communication

Technology (ICT) applications for the improvement in the process of government functioning to bring SMART i.e. Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent Governance.

In order to transform the entire eco-system of public services through the use of Information Technology, the government of India has launched the 'Digital India Programme' in 2015 with the vision to transform India into digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The programme focuses on access to high speed internet as a core utility for all Gram Panchayats, Unique lifelong, online and authenticable digital identity, mobile phone and bank account to enable participation in digital and financial space at the individual level, easy access to a Common Service Sentre (CSC) that provides e-services of the government in rural and remote locations. For digitalization in rural areas, the government has taken up Bharat Net in mission mode to connect all 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats in the country with 100 mbps broadband to bridge the rural coverage gap.

Further, for digital literacy in rural India, the government of India has been launched the 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan' (PMGDISHA) which is the largest digital literacy programme in the world. For inclusive development, the government has promoted digital inclusion by providing mobile connectivity to over 55,000 villages by March 2019 and initiating majors like Jan-Dhan Accounts, Debit Cards, Adhaar Pay, Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) to put an end to middle man and ensure that benefits of various government schemes directly reached beneficiaries through digital transactions.

Agriculture is the primary occupation in rural areas with challenges like poor market facility, weakening of input delivery, low price of products etc. For facilitating the agriculture commodities from one market area to another to benefit of farmer electronic trading platform for National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) has been launched by the Government of India.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To highlight the Digital India Programme.
2. To find out the impacts of implementing this project.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive and analytic in nature which is based on secondary data. The data collected from official websites of Government, Journals, Newspapers and related study.

VISION OF DIGITAL INDIA

The Digital India Vision gives the strengthen driving force to facilitate energy and advance for e-Governance and would advance comprehensive development that spreads electronic administrations, items, assembling and opening for work-

- **Governance and Services on request:** Digital India means to make a consistent environment over numerous administration divisions to make administrations accessible on both on the web and portable stages.

- **Digital Strengthening of Residents:** This programme will give widespread advance proficiency to empower nationals to utilize the computrised stage. The taxpayer supported organizations can be gotten to in nearby dialects to enable clients to take part in the new administration system. Since innovation is the key driver in India's financial development.

REQUIREMENT FOR DIGITAL SERVICES

Following are the basic infrastructure requirement for successful implementation of Digital Services delivery under Digital India Programme:

- Information & Communication Technology infrastructure, such as, Broadband Connectivity for people (wired/radio) up to Gram Panchayat (GP) level, Common Services Centres (CSCs) for consolidated service delivery to citizens through an integrated platform up to GP level.
- Government offices up to Panchayats having internet, Wi-Fi, Messaging, Video Confrencing, Skill-sets.
- Uninterrupted Power-supply.
- Skilled Manpower resources at least up to District level (prefedrably up to Gram Panchayat level for better implementation & monitoring).
- On demand scalable & secure cloud infrastructure up to Gram Panchayat level.
- Integration of National Data Centres, State Data Centres & other Data Centres.

PILLARS OF DIGITAL INDIA

The main pillars of Digital India are:

- **Broadband Highways:** Under this programme, high-speed broadband scope throughways will interface 25,000 towns, different government divisions, colleges, and so on. Moreover, National Information Infrastructure (NII) will guarantee the joining of the system and cloud foundation inside the nation to give rapid network to different government offices. These parts incorporate systems, for example, State Wide Area Network (SWAN), National Knowledge Network (NKN), National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN), Government User Network (GUN) and the MeghRaj Cloud.

- **Universal access to Mobile Connectivity:** Today, there exist around 55,619 towns in India that have no portable scope. To cover remote towns in the upper east, a far-reaching advancement design has been started that will be done in stages.

- **Public Internet Access Programme:** The hidden guideline of this activity is to make 250,000 Common Service Centres (CSCs) operational at the gram Panchayat level for conveyance of taxpayer supported organizations. In a comparable move, 150,000 post workplaces will be changed over into multi-benefit focuses.

- **E-administration: Reforming Government through Technology:** The thought is to utilize business process re-building to change government procedures and make them straight forward, robotized and productive. Under this, structures will be improved and just least and vital data will be gathered. So also, there will be a following procedure for the status of online applications. To additionally streamline the procedure, utilization of online vaults for declarations, instructive degrees, and character archives will be energized with the goal that these record don't need to be submitted in the physical frame.

- **Ekranti-Electronic Delivery of Services:** This column underscores on the utilization of innovation for benefit conveyance, for example, e-instruction, e-human services, innovative for arranging, last consideration and so on.

- **Information for All:** This is to give open access to government data and archives accessible on the web. This will empower a two-route correspondence between the natives and the legislature through online stages and web-based social networking. The greatest example of overcoming adversity is MyGov.in a stage for national engagement in administration, which was propelled by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 26th July, 2014 as a medium to trade throughout or recommendations with the legislature.

- **Electronics Manufacturing:** Under this programme, the objective is to achieve net zero imports by 2020 through execution in zones, for example, tax collection, economies of scale, expertise improvement, government acquirement and so on.

- **IT for Jobs:** This impression will give the required abilities and preparing to empower youth to discover occupations in the IT/ITes segment. This part additionally underlines on the setting up of BPOs to empower ICT-empowered development.

- **Early collect Programmes:** These early reap programmes comprise of a scope of undertakings to be done inside a short course of events. This incorporates an IT stage for messages, e-welcome from the administration, biometric participation and Wi-Fi in all colleges and so on.

IMPACT OF DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAMME ON SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

Technology can play a pivotal role in making agriculture and allied activities more aspirational for youth, improving the quality of production and the product itself and connecting farmers and their produce to the wider market. The expansion in coverage of National Agriculture Market (e-Nam) from the current 250 markets to 585 APMCs provides an opportunity to farmers to enhance skills in using digital technology at various stages of production and marketing of produce.

Greater broadband access would impact productivity of the agriculture sector as well as small enterprises through access to better technology, innovations and market. Steps are being taken to promote digital payments in petrol pumps, fertilizer depots, and municipalities, block offices, road transport offices, universities, colleges, hospitals and other institutions, such as using the recently launched BHIM app. Such initiatives lead to the correspondents and direct employment as Banking correspondents and others operating these digital facilities and also enhance digital literacy of all rural men and women, particularly the youth. Also, it will have the potential to generate new employment opportunities while enabling a host of services like e-commerce, e-learning, e-banking etc. The concept of dedicated payment Banks supported by digital platform and mobile operators that enable customers to load cash onto mobile wallets and send payments across the country can be can be of great significance for connecting the rural areas to wider markets.

The network of the Common Service Centres (CSCs) that are functional and are being strengthened as part of the Digital India Programme, deliver more than 300 digital services like Aadhaar enrolment, ticket booking, utility bill payments, tele-medicine, skilling services, digital literacy etc. in small towns and rural areas.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), the flagship programme to provide loans to promote rural entrepreneurship, loans are available to non-agricultural activities upto Rs. 10 lakh and activities allied to agriculture such as dairy, poultry, bee keeping etc., are also covered. Mudra's unique features include a Mudra Card which enables access to working capital through ATMs and Card Machines. A record of Rs. 1.80 lakh crore of loans have been sanctioned in financial year 2017-18, immensely benefiting entrepreneurs. The skill development programme, covering 45 lakh households, has been making a significant contribution to give further impetus to the Mudra Yojana. The flagship skill development scheme of the Government, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is expected to particularly benefit youth who are either school/college dropouts or unemployed. Apart from providing training according to the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), the Training centres under PMKVY also impart training in Soft Skills, Entrepreneurship, Financial and Digital Literacy. Under the PMKVY, all states have also been given targets for training youth.

CONCLUSION

Technology plays an important role in bringing about significant changes in the way of education, skill, wealth and other Public Services. The unprecedented growth in digital technology penetrating rural areas has paved the way for unlocking the potential for rural transformating. Our Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi has launched the 'Digital India' Programme for inclusive growth of rural development. Digital India movement have now become the agents of socio-economic changes in rural India.

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