

# “Developing Rural Entrepreneurship through e-Governance: A study of Common Service Centres in Haryana”

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## Abstract

Creating digital infrastructure forelectronic service delivery and employment generation in rural India is a persistent hurdle for Government of India. Various kinds of projects have been undertaken by government to enhance both entrepreneurship and e-Governance, one of those is Common Service Centre (CSC) rollout. CSC project is implemented under digital Indiaprogramme of government of India based on public private partnership (PPP)governing mode to strengthen entrepreneurship model and electronic governance in rural India. Limited number of studies haveemphasised on the importance of Common Service Centres (CSC) in transformation of rural India. The research paperconcerned tries to fill the gap by highlighting the impactof the CSC project implementation and few of the major challenges in implementation of the project. The study points outsome of the major recommendations which help to overcome challenges, to enhance the applicationof digital technologies in the arena of e-governance and entrepreneurship.

## Introduction

E-Governance is the term used to describe online functions of government or the ways by which services are provided to citizens online. Governance is carried out through the electronic media that provide an effective, rapid, accountable, and streamlined process of communication between the citizens and other institutions as well as for carrying out government administrative chores. This digital mode of service delivery around the world has made governance pattern more citizens friendly by ensuring participation of locals in the governing process. The rapid globalisation has connected the world through various modes and e-governance is considered as one of the fastest way by which world is coming closer. The advent of digital era presents various kinds of opportunities and challenges at the same time. As e-governance dehumanizes the processes it sometimes turns into inhumane manner of governance but if due check and balances are ensured it could provide citizen centric services in more effective manner. Digital era provides better and efficient ways of communications among sovereign states and their institutions. Citizens with the collaboration with media and usage of electronic medium could able to ensure better accountability from elected governments in vibrant democracies.

According to UNESCO (as cited in Prakash, 2016) e-governance refers to “the execution of governance using an electronic medium to enable an effective, quick, and transparent procedure for informing the public, other agencies, and for carrying out governmental administrative tasks”. This term described the use of the electronic media to wield authority, govern a nation's affairs, and articulate the interests of its citizens, resulting in better efficiency and transparency.

Muir & Oppenheim, (2002) referred e-governance as the dissemination of government information and services through online platform over the internet or other digital medium. Kumar et al. (2007) defined e-governance as mechanisms which providebetter digital services to residents, corporations, and other elements of society through the radical transformation of government’s information management.

The National e-Governance Plan intended to ensure the efficiency, dependability, and accessibility of such services while making several government schemes and services availablefor the common citizen in their neighbourhood via outlets for shared delivery of services. The information and communication technologies (ICTs) laid down new prospects for rapid social and economic transformation globally; e-government successfully provided better programmes and services. ICT directly affected the people, as they gained advantages from the use of online government services.

The majority of developing nations utilised ICT tools to modernise, boost internal efficiency, and enhance service delivery. Few of them initiated to deliver online information and services to citizens as a result of the

internet's development and rapid expansion. It had lowered the administrative cost of decision-making, enhanced accountability, reduced corruption, and fastens up processes by making information readily available online.

The main aim of e-governance are: i) to provide efficient internal organisational procedures in government; ii) more effectively offer services and information; iii) It enhances governmental openness to lessen corruption.; iv) strives to strengthen political accountability and credibility; and v) encourages democratic practises by involving and consulting the public.

E-governance is enhanced tool which helped to maintain and share the relation among citizens, businessmen, government and various government departments in the following ways:

1. Government to citizens (G2C): The use of G2C expedites efforts to offer citizens better, more reasonably priced government services. This idea of electronic governance refers to the public services that the government offers. The links to the services that the public wants to utilise are accessible here. It illustrated the deep connections between the government and its citizens. It depicts the government's use of information and communications technology to streamline the provision of services to citizens through a G2C connection.

2. Government to government (G2G): It points to the services that various governmental entities or levels of government share. The phrase “government-to-government” (G2G) describes the interactions and collaboration between the federal government, state governments, and various other government entities. The information is shared throughout the various departments, agencies, and organisations that make up the government for it to function efficiently.

3. Citizens to Government (C2G): Citizen's interactions with the government during the democratic process, such as voting, campaigning, providing feedback, etc., are referred to as "citizen to government" interactions. Active citizens contribute to the nation's progress.

4. Government to businessman (G2B): Governments want to automate their relationships with businesses, which they do in two different ways: business to government and government to business. E-procurement and government auctioning are the two main G2B areas. The use of communication strengthens the tie between the private sector and the public sector or government, resulting in an effective relationship.

### **Phases of e-governance in India**

There are two primary phases to the Indian e-government experience. The first stage spanned from the 1960s through the late 1990s, while the second started after that. The primary goal of first-phase e-government initiatives was to leverage digital infrastructure for central government functions including defence, research, economic monitoring and planning, and some data-intensive tasks connected to the national census, tax administration, and elections. In accordance with the implementation of the national IT task force by state government,

information technology (IT) policies shows the paradigm shift in e-governance policies towards the use of IT for a broad variety of applications reaching out to a large number of residents in rural as well as urban locations. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and businesses have contributed more to the provision of services to the general people. These endeavours have been motivated by the growing focus of international organisations such as UNDP and the World Bank under the slogan “E-governance for Development” (Madon, 2008).

The Government of India set up the department of electronics in 1970. The first big step towards e-governance was initiated with the creation of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1976. Projects were started in the 1990s in areas like land management, transportation, complaint resolution, social programmes, tracking the movement of records and files, monitoring development projects, processing payrolls for workers, reports generation, etc. Both governmental and private sector organisations adopted ICT for delivery of services. Kiosk were installed at the village level. People used these as “One Stop Shops” to quickly access crucial village-level facilities as well as critical information. The Government of India (GoI) has made a number of efforts to advance e-governance in India in recognition of the growing relevance of electronics (Mishra, 2014; Patel, 2008).

Haryana implemented central and state mission mode e-governance projects in almost every district. The state has transformed its service delivery mechanisms to empower citizens by providing access to online

services in real time atmosphere. The state has established centres at district and tehsil level for the overall monitoring of common service centres operated by the authorised agents. This facilitated the citizens to get services in cost efficient and time bound manner at the doorstep.

### **Common Service Centres (CSC)**

Common Service Centres (CSC) are institutional contact points that made it possible to supply e-Services to even the most rural areas of the nation. With this method of service delivery, several service facilities were intended to be made available for a variety of transactions at a single geographic area. The important public utility services, social welfare programmes, healthcare, financial, educational, and agricultural services were all delivered through CSCs. It hosted (Business to Customer) B2C services for people in both rural and urban areas of the nation. It is a decentralised network laid out across Indian Territory that ensured delivery of services to the nation’s regional, geographic, linguistic, and cultural communities. CSCs have assisted the government to realise its goal of a society that is inclusive on all fronts i.e. socially, economically, and technologically.

As a component of the third pillar of Digital India, the “Public Internet Access Programme-National Rural Internet Mission and supply different citizen-centric services,” the Government of India started the CSC 2.0 Project in August 2015. All of the country’s gram panchayats were now included in the common service centres reach. With regard to the 2.50 lakh gram panchayats, it sought to establish at least one centre (GPs). A business formed under the Companies Act of 1956, CSC e-Governance Services India Ltd, is the organisation in charge of carrying out the project (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, 2015).

The four pillars of CSC 2.0 are the outlet network, the centralised delivery of e-Services via a global technical platform, the strengthening of institutional framework for influencing socioeconomic behaviour, and the local language VLE (village level entrepreneur) help desk. All parties have a technologically driven partnership in place to make the deployment traceable and responsible. The initiative has given considerable weight to the development of VLEs training and ability in order to make them self-sufficient. During the implementation phase, it made sure that everyone used the required “Entrepreneurship Training” that covered all VLEs at least once. To conduct the training workshops across the country with coordination of State/UTs district administrative machinery, a CSC special purpose vehicle is required. At the national level, the programme is carried out by CSC SPV, which has been designated as the nodal implementing agency, as part of the third pillar of the Digital India Plan (Kumar et al, 2018).

The International School of Business (ISB) had released a report titled “Impact Assessment of Common service centres 2.0 scheme” in 2018. The report had recommended the following:

- i. Both central and state government should build awareness among rural youth regarding the potential of common service centres for employment creation.
- ii. Broadband internet access and connectivity till the remotest corner can provide support for rural entrepreneurship.
- iii. Investment in human capital such as training, capacity building, digital literacy etc. are needed to be ensured by public and private partnerships.
- iv. Common service centres model of rural governance can help government in promoting digital literacy in rural areas for digital empowerment of society.

A CSC e-governance service limited is a company registered as special purpose vehicle (SPV) under companies’ act 1956. It is established under MeitY for providing and monitoring overall functioning of CSCs across the India. The company had released its **annual report** for the year 2021-22 (data depicted **till 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**). The data revealed the following for the state of Haryana:

- i. Total numbers of active CSCs (Rural and Urban) in the state are 19815.
- ii. Number of CSCs (Rural and Urban) run by women entrepreneurs are 2671 which comprised of 1912 rural centres and 759 urban centres.
- iii. CSCs have supported government in implementation of Ayushmanbharat scheme. In the state CSCs have registered 15.97 lakh beneficiaries and issued golden card to 16.06 lakhs.
- iv. Number of LPG connections booked through CSCs are 493622.
- v. Number of PM Shram Yogi Mandhan (PMSYM) card printed are 821663.

- vi. CSCs have provided Tele Law services in which it registered 42575 number of cases and advised on 38246 cases.
- vii. Numbers of electricity bills paid are 43.87 lakhs amounting to Rs. 559.48 cr.

The state of Haryana is implementing common service centres project under the brand name AntyodayaSaral Centres or Atal SewaKendras. The project AntyodayaSaral has won Gold award at 23<sup>rd</sup> National Conference of e-Governance 2019-20. Common service centre have ensured the effective citizen centric service delivery in the state of Haryana and provided new avenues of employment in the vicinity of rural areas. The concept has led to the emergence of new young entrepreneurs including both young men and women which transformed the society into digitally and financially inclusive.

### **Objectives**

The main goal of the study undertaken is to determine how Common Service Centres in India, namely the State of Haryana, affect the creation of jobs through village-level entrepreneurship. The study demonstrates the impact of CSCs on two key participants in e-Governance projects, namely Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), who serve as service providers, and the general public, who receives benefits. The study also looks at how important e-governance projects are for the overall success of providing citizen-centered services in rural regions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of this study is to examine whether E-Governance initiatives serves as a model of good governance and assisted in creating rural level entrepreneurship with the help of citizen participation.

### **Hypothesis**

1. E-governance ensures rural development in India.
2. Common service centres efficiently deliver e-services to rural citizens.
3. E-governance promotes rural employment and entrepreneurship.
4. Rollout of Common service centres led to women empowerment.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study involves data collection from multiple secondary sources including published sources like the websites, research papers, case study books and periodicals and newspaper reports.

### **Analysis**

E-governance initiatives across India have successfully transformed the socio-economic landscape. These have not only provided the last mile connectivity for digital services but also ensured the transparency and accountability in the governing processes. In the state of Haryana, Common service centres are created as a special purpose vehicle where public and private sector partnership is allowed. These centres have proved to be successful model in employment generation as they created entrepreneurship at the village level with the citizen participation. Annual report released by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) revealed that state of Haryana has connected its entire gram panchayats i.e. 13900 with digital enabled CSCs and has 19815 active CSCs in rural and urban area combined till March 2022. Also, women participation in the Village Level Entrepreneurship has been increased across the state.

### **Conclusion**

Government have certain limitation in terms of resources when it comes to implementation of project in modern times. It resorted to public private partnership (PPP) where resources are shared between the businesses and individuals. Government of Haryana implemented Common service centres (CSCs) project in PPP mode. This is based on the guidelines issued by the Ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) for the implementation of common service centres (CSCs). These centres proved the efficacy of ICT in the delivery of citizen centric services where it provided the welfare schemes and services to the intended beneficiaries across the state in time bound manner. These Centres generated employment at the grassroots level and with the help of citizen participation ensured the transparent e-service delivery.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government should strive to create a digital inclusive system by providing digital infrastructure till remotest corner.

2. Both public and private sector should embrace new age emerging cutting edge technologies for improved service delivery.
3. In order to ensure cyber security for citizen’s data, government should create a resilient digital infrastructure.
4. Common service centres model of rural governance can help in women empowerment in rural areas if digital literacy of women is ensured.
5. Investment in human capital such as training and capacity building is to be provided by public and private partnerships for upskilling workforce.
6. In order to make India a digital economy through CSCs, government should encourage citizens to opt more for digital methods of payment transactions while availing services at the centres.
7. Both central and state government should create awareness among rural youth regarding the potential of common service centres for employment and rural entrepreneurship.

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