

Chapter V

Making ICT more Meaningful for Governance in the Rural Areas: Role of the Community Knowledge Systems

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ABSTRACT

The speed and outreach enabled by information and communication technologies (ICT) have improved mechanisms of delivery of information, services and products to the public. ICT as an enabler of governance, christened as e-governance, is seen as means of attaining good governance. The millennium development goals (MDG) of targeting the poor, listening to the poor and learning from the poor seem to be more within the reach through the use of ICT. However the sustainability of majority of rural ICT interventions has not been very encouraging. The study of literature attributes this negligible success rate to several factors including neglect of traditional indigenous knowledge in the projects designed for rural masses. Authors of this study propose that by defining a proper framework and by use of proper methodologies, community knowledge systems (CKS) of a rural region, when incorporated in an e-governance initiative can assist various actors and processes of governance to attain good governance. Projects based on the proposed CKS based G2C2G framework are expected to be more sustainable and effective

for ushering development in the rural areas. However, implementation of such projects would however require synergistic efforts between the government functionaries, aid agencies, non-profit organizations and the rural citizens. The prime hypothesis is that the assimilation, improvisation and dissemination of the traditional community knowledge systems (CKS) using ICT initiatives for rural governance, would help to liberate local ingenuity to catalyse sustainable rural development.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Rural Development can make a powerful contribution to four critical goals of: Poverty Reduction, Wider shared growth, Household, national, and global food security and Sustainable natural resource management (World Bank, 1997).

Development is a dynamic process that is entirely an aftermath of human decisions and multiplicity of choices available to them (Sen, 1987). Modern goals of development have laid emphasis on poverty reduction to provide people with better means and resources (for details see Leys, 1996; Rahnama and Victoria, 1997). Emergence of **ICT** has accelerated development towards its goals and led to economic growth and social empowerment of people in the developing countries (Nandi, 2002). Rural economies too can be benefited from ICT by focusing on social production, social consumption and social services to be rendered in the villages (Malhotra, 2001). Any improvement, in the social or economic status of rural areas would not just directly benefit rural poor but would also bring down the migration-pressures on cities and contribute by positive ripple effect in global stride towards Development. Rural Development is the prime concern of governance in the global context.

The chapter is divided in three sections. In the first section of the chapter titled ‘Governance for Rural Development using **ICT**’, the authors examine the changing paradigm of governance to usher rural development. The chief focus of Governance stays on economic growth and social empowerment of the rural communities that can be

enabled by implementation of new-technologies. Several thinkers have therefore studied application of Information and Communication technologies (ICT) in the processes of governance some of which are summarised in this section. The authors also define and demarcate between the popular terms like ‘**e-Government**’ and ‘**e-Governance**’ and further tapers to the issues confronting ICT implementation in rural governance. Research studies indicate that not all ICT initiatives have been successful in improving the quality of life of the rural poor. Some remedial considerations such as ‘Inputs to ICT from Community Knowledge’ and ‘Design of rural **e-Governance** Projects using Systems Approach’ have been delineated in the subsequent section titled ‘An Alternative Design Strategy’. The review of literature puts forth that the improvement of the quality of life in the rural areas, particularly the poor and socially disadvantaged sections of society is possible by prudent use of Information Communication Technologies (**ICT**) especially if fused with the prevailing **Community Knowledge Systems (CKS)** of the region. On basis of this, the final section suggests ‘An Integrated Approach to Rural **e-Governance** Projects’. In its first part titled ‘The Proposed **CKS** based G2C2G framework’ the authors propose a Systems-based, inclusive framework by the same name. The next part of the section referred as ‘Projects Based on **CKS** based G2C2G Framework’, the authors summarise the goal, objectives, phases of the project **lifecycle**, suggested methodology as well as the key deliverables and benefits that are expected of the projects emanating from the proposed framework. The chapter concludes after putting forth the ‘Future Directions’ for implementation

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