

Digital India Programmes: Scopes and Prospects for Rural Population in India

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Abstract: *The Indian government's Digital India program intends to make India a knowledge economy and a society empowered by technology. It includes a number of programs aimed at closing the digital divide and guaranteeing that the advantages of technology are felt throughout the nation, even in rural areas. With the use of digital technologies to empower rural populations and solve a range of issues, Digital India has great potential to improve the socioeconomic status and quality of life in rural India. The Digital India program is one such project that has helped India become the world's most digitally advanced economy. The nation wants to close the digital gap between the urban and rural sectors and elevate the rural areas in particular as engines of growth. In order to fully achieve digitalization in rural India, a few areas of focus for innovation have been proposed. The current article aims to assess the many initiatives that have been implemented thus far to promote digitalization in the rural sector.*

Keywords: Digital India, Internet penetration, Villages, Digital literacy

1. Introduction

When e - governance first began in India in 1970, the Indian government established the Department of Electronics. The following establishment of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1977, which focused on 'information' and its dissemination, was India's first substantial move toward e - governance. However, computer use needs to increase during the next ten years. Computers were used in workplaces and by government officials, but their uses were confined to text processing. Established in 1987, the National Satellite - Based Computer Network (NICNET) played a pivotal role in advancing India's e - governance initiatives. To computerize district offices nationwide, state governments provided complimentary hardware and software, facilitating the development of the District Information Systems of the National Informatics Center (DISNIC).

Liberalization in the early 1990s, along with increased technology and connectivity, generated a surge in e - governance projects at the state and union levels. In 1998, the Union government created a communication and information technology task team. The Union Ministry of Information and Technology was formed as a consequence. The tax department at the state and union levels was the first to use e - governance to significantly enhance internal processes. In other words, by the mid - 1990s, India's e - governance initiatives had expanded to include more extensive sectoral applications with an emphasis on citizen - centric services.

Later, several states and UTs initiated e - government programs. Even though these e - government services were designed to meet the demands of residents, they may have been more effective. In 2006, the Indian government officially presented its National e - Governance Plan (NeGP), which included 31 mission - mode initiatives. NeGP aimed to give all government services to the people online. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) and the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) worked together to produce NeGP. Nonetheless, despite multiple e - governance initiatives being successfully deployed across the country, it

was thought that e - governance as a whole had yet to have the expected impact and fulfill all of its objectives.

2. Digital India Initiatives

In 2006, the Indian government announced its National e - Governance Plan (NeGP), which included 31 mission - mode initiatives. NeGP aimed to give all government services to the people online. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) and the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) worked together to produce NeGP. Nonetheless, even though various e - governance initiatives were successfully deployed across the country, it was thought that e - governance as a whole had failed to have the desired impact and fulfill all of its objectives.

The ambitious "Digital India" initiative seeks to strengthen India's digital economy. This initiative was inaugurated on July 1, 2015 by Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi. This approach aims to build a system that is accountable, transparent, and participatory. It focuses on providing its residents with high - speed internet and making services available via both web and mobile platforms. This initiative was designed and overseen by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology, as well as the Federal and State governments. The fundamental purpose of the Digital India mission is to bridge the connectivity gap between urban and rural areas. Digitization, a complete means of preserving and accessing knowledge material, changes the way collections are used.

The widespread adoption of digital technologies for creating, processing, distributing, and managing digital information has initiated a significant societal shift. This article endeavors to conceptualize Digital India as a campaign aimed at leveraging connections and technologies to facilitate effective governance. The Indian government's vision for its citizens, Digital India, has the potential to amalgamate various ongoing and past initiatives, propelling India onto the global stage. It aligns with global trends in digital innovation and

promises to positively impact the lives of individuals across urban and rural areas, encompassing diverse age groups.

Embarking on an ambitious journey, the Indian government aims to transform India into a digital nation, fostering online communication with its constituents. At the core of the "Digital India" initiative lies the digitization of services, facilitating interactions with citizens, businesses, and other governmental bodies. The rapid growth of digitally equipped economies, exemplified by China, underscores the potential for accelerated development through digital enablement. Under the overarching umbrella of "Digital India," existing programs will undergo reorganization and refocusing to catalyze transformative change. The overarching goal of the Digital India vision is to propel the nation towards a digital economy, leveraging the collective efforts of enterprises and individuals. This initiative aims to ensure round - the - clock accessibility to government information and services via user - friendly, seamless, highly available, and secure digital platforms.

Keys Areas of Digital India Programmes

The Digital India plan aspires to transition India into a knowledge - based society and economy, emphasizing three key aspects:

- **Universal Access to Digital Infrastructure:** Essential to digital inclusion is the government's commitment to connect 250, 000 Gram Panchayats to high - speed internet, providing citizens with a personal, permanent, and usable digital identity. Access to shareable private spaces on public clouds and Common Service Centers will be facilitated for all citizens.
- **On - Demand Governance and Services:** Seamless integration of government agencies through high - speed optical fiber will enhance collaboration and enable the real - time delivery of services via online or mobile platforms. Digitally transforming services aims to streamline business processes and ensure nationwide access to citizen rights via cloud - based platforms. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will be leveraged for development and decision - making support.
- **Digital Empowerment of Citizens:** Ensuring access to digital resources and promoting digital literacy are central to this vision. Documentation and certificates will be made available in Indian languages and stored in the cloud. Interactive digital platforms for democratic participation will be established to empower citizens.

By focusing on these objectives, the Digital India initiative seeks to harness the transformative potential of digital technologies to drive inclusive growth and empower citizens across India.

Nine Pillars of Digital India

1) Broadband Highways

According to official documents, Broadband Highways is composed of three primary components. The government has set aside \$5 billion to build high - speed broadband infrastructure connecting municipalities, government buildings, educational institutions, and research facilities. Broadband, particularly through fiber networks, is recognized as critical to promoting digital development and solving

challenges identified in the Millennium Development Goals. The National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN) project, which is supported by the Universal Service Obligation Fund, seeks to deliver internet connection to all 250, 000 gram panchayats by 2016. BSNL, PowerGrid Corporation, and RAILTEL are spearheading this ambitious \$200 billion project, which includes the installation of 600, 000 kilometers of fiber across the country. The National Information Infrastructure combines networks such as SWAN, NKN, and NOFN, enabling horizontal connection for up to 100, 50, 20, and 5 government offices.

2) Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity

Universal Access to cell Connectivity aims to increase network coverage across the country, notably in the 55, 669 localities that currently lack cell service. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is coordinating efforts to extend mobile service to underserved areas, notably in the Northeast.

3) Public Internet Access Programme

The Public Internet Access Programme intends to address countrywide network gaps by providing mobile connectivity to 42, 300 disconnected localities. This effort is overseen by the DoT and is expected to cost Rs 16, 000 crore in fiscal year 2014 - 18. Common Service Centers (CSCs) and Post Offices act as multi - service hubs for the Public Internet Access Programme. Plans include increasing the number of CSCs from 1, 37, 000 to 2, 50, 000, with one CSC per Gram Panchayat, to improve their capacities as delivery centers for government and commercial services. CSCs are overseen by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY), whilst the Department of Posts oversees transforming 1, 50, 000 post offices into multi - service centers.

4) E - Governance: Reforming Government through Technology

In the field of government business process reform, information technology (IT) plays a critical role in improving communication channels. This reform must apply to all departments and ministries across the country. The following actions are critical for promoting this technological progress within the government:

- **Transition to electronic databases:** Manual databases must be converted into electronic versions to improve data management operations and ensure accessibility and efficiency.
- **Workflow Computerization:** All Indian agencies and departments must have electronic workflow systems that are automatically updated. This not only improves operating efficiency but also increases transparency and accessibility for residents across the country.
- **Public Grievance Redressal:** The government and its different agencies should be able to assess, automate, and respond quickly to citizen complaints. This proactive strategy not only makes procedures run more smoothly, but it also saves significant time for individuals and government agencies.

5) E - Krani Electronic Delivery of Services

Currently, there are 31 e - governance mission mode projects and 10 more will be added to e - Kranti. These include:

- *Technology for education*: all educational centers must be connected to the e - education network. All schools, including primary schools, have free Wi - Fi. As a result, your literacy skills will improve.
- *Health Technology*: This section contains online advice for everyone. E - health also includes checking medical records and ordering medicines online.
- *Planning Skills*: This mission mode program has a GIS - based option. This is used in the conceptual, planning, design and development phases of the project.
- *Technology for farmers*: Farmers can generate accurate information about their inputs and place orders online using technology. Cash and bank accounts are also offered electronically.
- *Technology for security*: providing services to citizens and reducing casualties during emergencies and disasters.
- *Technology for Financial Inclusion*: The use of technology will improve the post office, use of micro ATMs, and mobile banking.
- *Technology for justice*, including online courts, prisons, police and prosecutors.
- *Cyber Security Technology*: This center focuses on creating a secure online environment.

1.7.6 Information for All

The major purpose is to provide all the information that Indian citizens seek. Furthermore, technology makes communication with the government far easier than physically visiting multiple government organizations to obtain information.

- Hosting of online information and reports.
- Online networking effectively recruits government stars. This will notify the public of any fresh information or news, and vice versa.
- Online informing involves alerting the public via SMS or email about special events or programs.
- All of these will exhaust a major percentage of the existing base, necessitating the acquisition of fresh resources.

Electronics Manufacturing – Target NET ZERO Imports

This pillar places a strong emphasis on encouraging homegrown electronics production to boost the expansion of the digital economy and lessen reliance on imports. Aiming for NET ZERO Imports is a bold declaration of determination. Achieving this ambitious objective demands synchronized efforts across various areas such as taxation, incentives, achieving economies of scale, cost reduction, and focusing on key sectors like FABS, Fab - less design, Set top boxes, VSATs, Mobiles, Consumer & Medical Electronics, Smart Energy meters, Smart cards, micro - ATMs. It also involves establishing incubators and clusters, enhancing skill development, and reforming government procurement processes.

IT Sector

This component of Digital India intends to provide youth with the skills required to obtain work in the IT/ITES sector. This column has a total of four groups, each with its own function. The first phase, which will last five years, aims to educate one billion students from small towns and villages to work in the IT industry. The nodal office for this project is DeitY. To encourage ICT growth in these nations, the second phase focuses on building business process outsourcing (BPO)

services in all northern countries. The third phase focuses on preparing 300, 000 service delivery officers to establish and manage successful IT service delivery businesses. The nodal office for this project is DeitY.

Early Harvest Programs

- The IT messaging level includes representatives and employees of the national government.
- Various designs and types of government greetings have been introduced through electronic greetings.
- All Indian central government offices in Delhi use biometric attendance.

The Government of India and its vision for Digital India should be clear between the two. Digital Marketing Companies in Hyderabad are very much in favor of digitization. Apart from offering digital payments, the government is also pushing for everyone to have a bank account and mobile number.

Aadhaar card linking makes transactions easier. Loans and installments are paid immediately and without delay. Another initiative that can speed up the issuance of birth and death certificates is e - governance. These are some of the steps taken by the Indian government for the development of the country.

3. Conclusion

The Digital India initiative, launched by the Indian government on July 2, 2015, with the motivation "Power to Empower," strives to foster fair development in electronic services. By offering comprehensive facilities and services, the program seeks to establish virtual and electronic connectivity, fostering the nation's progress in the digital realm. The objective is to empower the population with advanced digital and electronic technologies, enabling the connection of both rural and urban areas through network devices and services. Multiple efforts have been initiated as part of Digital India endeavors to enable individuals in sectors like healthcare, education, employment, and commerce. The launch of Digital India Week aims to educate and empower people through the Government of India's Digital India Programme. This comprehensive initiative encompasses various projects aimed at transforming India into a knowledge - based economy and ensuring efficient governance through coordinated efforts across government agencies. Spearheaded by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY), Digital India involves collaboration with central ministries, departments, and state governments.

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