

An Evaluation of the Role of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in Strengthening Rural Governance and Development: A Study of Panchrukhi Block, Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract: *This has given rise to the transformative power of technology in enhancing rural governance, to make it more transparent, accountable, service-oriented and participatory. To improve grassroots governance, the Government of India has launched several digital governance initiatives such as Digital India, e-Panchayat, Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). But it is difficult to find empirical evidence on their effectiveness in rural and hilly areas. This study aims at analysing the role of technology in promoting rural governance and development in Panchrukhi block of Kangra district in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The overall research design in this study is descriptive research design and type of data used is primary data which is obtained from a structured questionnaire carried out by distributing the form through Google Form with a sample of 103 respondents. The data was analysed using descriptive statistical methods like frequencies and percentages. The results indicate a high degree of digital preparedness among the respondents, as a large proportion of them owned a smartphone (94.1%), spent time on the internet every day (92.2%), and had access to bank accounts (100%). It also shows that a majority of the respondents were aware of major digital governance initiatives such as Digital India (80.6%), Common Service Centres (80.6%) and e-Governance services (71.8%). Most of the respondents who were contacted stated that they use digital platforms to access government services, online banking, payment of utility bills, welfare schemes and to communicate with Panchayati Raj Institutions. The study also shows that respondents believe that technology enhances transparency (90.3%), transparency in reducing corruption (71.8%), citizen participation (86.4%), faster delivery of government benefits (85.4%) and access to education (98.1%), health services (90.3%) and welfare programmes (87.4%). However, there are still other challenges such as lack of internet connectivity, weak electricity supply, lack of digital skills, language barriers, and gender and age disparities in access to digital technologies. The study concludes that technology has successfully enhanced rural governance and helped to achieve inclusive rural development, but continuing investments in digital infrastructure, technology capacity building, digital literacy and institutional strengthening are needed to ensure digital governance initiatives are implemented in a sustainable and equitable manner in rural areas.*

Keywords: Rural Governance; Digital Governance; Information and Communication Technology (ICT); E-Governance; Digital India; Panchayati Raj Institutions; Common Service Centres (CSCs); Rural Development; Digital Inclusion; Himachal Pradesh

1. Introduction

In developing countries where most people live in rural areas and rely on their agricultural income. Poor infrastructure, poor access to public services, institutional inefficiencies, and lack of information are all issues that rural areas in India still struggle with today that affect socio-economic development and good governance. Digital technologies have become valuable tools in enhancing transparency, accountability, administrative efficiency and citizen involvement in governance in recent years (Qi & Qi, 2023)¹. The fast development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has revolutionized public administration, providing governments the possibilities to perform their tasks more efficiently and

communicate with citizens via digital channels. E-governance is one of the important initiatives in the area of public service delivery to provide online access to various services like land records, certificates, welfare schemes, grievance redressal systems etc. These measures facilitate administration, cut down delays and boost transparency and accountability (Heeks, 2001²; Rao, 2004³). The Government of India has taken several measures to enhance governance at panchayat level, such as the Digital India, e-Panchayat, Common Service Centres (CSCs), and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). The purpose of these programmes is to empower Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), enhance access to digital public services, encourage citizen engagement, and

¹ Qi, B., & Qi, T. (2023). Research on the development of rural governance based on digital technology. *Agricultural & Forestry Economics and Management*, 6(3), 53–63. <https://doi.org/10.23977/agrfem.2023.060309>

² Heeks, R. (2001). *Understanding e-governance for development*. Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester.

³ Rao, T. P. R. (2004, December). *ICT and e-governance for rural development*. Paper presented at the Conference on Governance in Development: Issues, Challenges and Strategies, Gujarat, India

increase the effectiveness of rural government (Verma & Kumari, 2010; Ranade et al., 2015)⁴. Digital technologies have helped in the development of the rural areas apart from the role of governance: Digital technologies have ensured greater access to education, health, financial services, agricultural information and employment opportunities leading to socio-economic development (Singh, 2004⁵; Reddy, 2007⁶). However, digital governance is not uniform in rural India, which covers 70% of the population. Lack of adequate internet connection, lack of digital literacy, lack of awareness of digital services and infrastructural problems remain as inhibitors to the effective use of technology for governance, especially in geographically remote areas (Mittal & Kaur, 2013)⁷. Thus, the development of digital infrastructure is not enough without capacity building and increase the awareness of citizens. While earlier research has noted the role of ICTs in transparency, administrative efficiency and citizen participation, the empirical evidence on the ground remains scarce, particularly in the case of Panchayati Raj Institutions of the hill states of India (Heeks, 2001⁸; Kosec & Wantchekon, 2020⁹). Digital governance initiatives are particularly effective for these regions, but given the unique geographical and socio-economic context, it is important to study these regions separately to understand their effectiveness. With this background, the current study explores the contribution of technology to enhance rural governance and development in Panchrukhi Block of Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh. It specifically gauges awareness and use of digital governance services, analyzes the role of technology towards transparency, accountability and service delivery, and outlines the main issues regarding the implementation of digital governance at the grassroots. The research findings can help evidence based policy and institutional measures to improve technology-aided rural governance.

2. Review of Literature

The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into governance has transformed the delivery of public services or citizen-Government interaction by governments. As the literature shows, ICTs are no longer just communication tools; however, they have a strategic role in making administrative more efficient, transparent and accountable as well as establishing citizen participation

(Faguet et al 2014)¹⁰. Digital technologies provide timely information access, increase coordination between institutions, and help to make decisions based on evidence all of which could potentially lead to better governance and development in rural areas in a sustainable fashion (Heeks 2001¹¹; Rao 2004¹²; Kosec & Wantchekon 2020¹³).

Extensive studies emphasize the importance of digital governance to enhance public service delivery in rural areas. Success stories like Digital India, e-Panchayat, Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) in several sectors have made life easier for the common man by providing government services closer to them and easing administrative delay with simplification of procedures that leads to efficiency of local governance institutions. Such initiatives provided digital storage and management of records, delivery of services online, enabling financial transactions and engaging with the citizens (Verma & Kumari, 2010¹⁴; Ranade et al., 2015¹⁵), thus strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The literature also highlights the importance of technology in increasing transparency, accountability and participatory governance. Digital platforms facilitate access to government data, tracking of public programmes, grievance lodging and involvement in decision-making processes by citizens. These mechanisms help prevent corruption, increase administrative accountability, and promote public confidence in governance institutions. Therefore, technology-enabled governance is now an integral part of democratic decentralization and good governance (Heeks, 2001¹⁶; Kosec & Wantchekon, 2020).

Besides the governance domain, ICT has played an important role in rural Afghanistan, which had very limited access to financial services or most of other essential services like education, health and agricultural extension as well as direct employment. Through a number of avenues such as digital banking, online payment systems, and providing information on weather, markets and better farming practices, digital technologies is helping farmers. Likewise, e-learning means training/education by inter-

⁴ Ranade, P., Londhe, S., & Mishra, A. (2015). Smart villages through information technology: Need of emerging India. *IPASJ International Journal of Information Technology (IJIT)*, 3(7), 1–6.

⁵ Singh, N. (2004). Information technology and rural development in India. In B. Debroy & A. U. Khan (Eds.), *Integrating the rural poor into markets* (pp. 221–246). Academic Foundation.

⁶ Reddy, A. K. N. (2007). *Energy technologies and sustainable rural development. Energy for Sustainable Development*, 11(4), 79–88.

⁷ Mittal, P., & Kaur, A. (2013). E-governance—A challenge for India. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Engineering & Technology (IJARCET)*, 2(3), 1196–1199

⁸ Heeks, R. (2001). *Understanding e-governance for development*. Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester.

⁹ Kosec, K., & Wantchekon, L. (2020). *Can information improve rural governance and development? Annual Review of Political Science*, 23, 251–269.

¹⁰ Faguet, J.-P. (2014). *Decentralization and governance*. World Development, 53, 2–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2013.01.002>

¹¹ Heeks, R. (2001). *Understanding e-Governance for Development* (iGovernment Working Paper No. 11). Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester.

¹² Rao, T. P. R. (2004, December). *ICT and e-governance for rural development*. Paper presented at the Conference on Governance in Development: Issues, Challenges and Strategies, Gujarat, India

¹³ Kosec, K., & Wantchekon, L. (2020). *Can information improve rural governance and development? Annual Review of Political Science*, 23, 251–269.

¹⁴ Verma, R. K., & Kumari, A. (2010). e-Governance at grassroots level in South Asia: A study of citizen-centric e-Panchayats in India. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Rural Development*, 20(1), 131–150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1018529120100109>

¹⁵ Ranade, P., Londhe, S., & Mishra, A. (2015). Smart villages through information technology: Need of emerging India. *IPASJ International Journal of Information Technology (IJIT)*, 3(7), 1–6

¹⁶ Heeks, R. (2001). *Understanding e-Governance for Development* (iGovernment Working Paper No. 11). Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester.

relating these resources with the help of digital information which is a potential and effective tool to provide knowledge and skill set like online education, telemedicine and other communication platforms for delivering services have improved easy access to essential services (Singh, 2004¹⁷; Reddy, 2007¹⁸; Ranade et al., 2015¹⁹) thus results in high standard of living pattern and socio-economic well-being in rural society.

However, the reality is that multiple studies still point out barriers here, limiting effective digital governance implementation. In more rural and geographically remoter regions, poor internet connectivity, lack of digital infrastructure, low levels of general digital literacy skills, language barriers and lack of institutional capacity limit take-up and use of products. In addition to the platform characteristics, researchers also emphasize that socio-economic characteristics like education, income level and gender as well as age significantly affect acceptance and effective usage of digital governance platforms. These results imply that just providing technological infrastructure is not a precondition for effective digital governance, alongside investments in awareness generation, capacity building and institutional maturity must also be made (Mittal & Kaur, 2013; Qi & Qi, 2023)²⁰.

While there are many studies that emphasize the significance of ICT in governance and rural development, empirical studies at the grassroot level is still limited. While several studies have examined national programmes or state level reforms, limited research has evaluated citizens' awareness, access, use and perceptions towards digital governance at the citizen interface of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Further, while the empirical evidence from the hill state of Himachal Pradesh is limited due to its geographical and socio-economic specialization. The current study fills in this gap by analyzing the impact of rising technology in rural governance and development at Panchrukhi Block-Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh.

3. Research Gap

The existing body of literature demonstrates that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and digital governance have significantly improved administrative efficiency, transparency, and public service delivery across many countries. Previous studies have extensively examined the role of ICT in agriculture, rural development, digital inclusion, e-governance, financial

services, education, and healthcare. Similarly, researchers have highlighted the contribution of national initiatives such as Digital India, e-Panchayat, Common Service Centres (CSCs), Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and the National e-Governance Plan in improving governance outcomes and citizen engagement.

Despite these contributions, several important research gaps remain. First, a considerable proportion of existing studies are conceptual, descriptive, or policy-oriented, focusing primarily on national or state-level digital governance initiatives. Comparatively fewer empirical studies have investigated the actual implementation and effectiveness of digital governance at the grassroots level, particularly within Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

Second, while previous research has largely emphasized technological infrastructure, internet connectivity, and digital service delivery, relatively little attention has been given to understanding how rural citizens perceive, access, and utilize technology-enabled governance services in their daily interactions with local government institutions.

Third, empirical evidence from geographically challenging regions such as Himachal Pradesh remains limited. The unique topography, dispersed settlements, and socio-economic characteristics of hill states may significantly influence the adoption and effectiveness of digital governance initiatives. Consequently, findings from other regions cannot be directly generalized to the Himalayan context.

Finally, there is limited block-level research examining the combined effects of technology on transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and service delivery within rural governance systems. Addressing these gaps requires localized empirical investigations that evaluate both the opportunities and challenges associated with technology-enabled governance.

The present study addresses these research gaps by examining the role of technology in strengthening rural governance and development in Panchrukhi Block of Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh. By providing empirical evidence from a grassroots administrative unit, the study contributes to a better understanding of digital governance in rural India and offers practical recommendations for improving technology-enabled governance systems.

4. Objectives of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- 1) To examine the role of technology in strengthening rural governance in Panchrukhi Block of Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh.
- 2) To analyse the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in local governance institutions.
- 3) To assess the impact of technology on transparency, accountability, and public service delivery in rural governance.
- 4) To evaluate the level of awareness and accessibility of digital governance services among rural citizens.

¹⁷ Singh, N. (2004). *Information technology and rural development in India* (Working Paper No. 563). Department of Economics, University of California, Santa Cruz. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9wj6d6kv>

¹⁸ Reddy, A. K. N. (2007). *Energy technologies and sustainable rural development*. *Energy for Sustainable Development*, 11(4), 79–88.

¹⁹ Ranade, P., Londhe, S., & Mishra, A. (2015). Smart villages through information technology: Need of emerging India. *IPASJ International Journal of Information Technology (IJIT)*, 3(7), 1–6

²⁰ Qi, B., & Qi, T. (2023). Research on the development of rural governance based on digital technology. *Agricultural & Forestry Economics and Management*, 6(3), 53–63. <https://doi.org/10.23977/agrfem.2023.060309>

- 5) To identify the major challenges associated with the implementation of technology-enabled governance in rural areas.

5. Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and review of literature, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Technology has a significant positive influence on transparency in rural governance.

H2: The adoption of digital technologies significantly improves the efficiency of public service delivery in rural governance.

H3: Higher awareness of digital governance services positively influences citizen participation in rural governance.

These hypotheses were developed from the theoretical understanding that ICT facilitates greater transparency, administrative efficiency, and citizen engagement within decentralized governance institutions.

6. Conceptual Framework

The research paradigm for this study is a conceptual paradigm based on the following assumptions, namely digital technologies as catalysts in enhancing rural governance and development. It envisions that technology interventions like ICT, Digital India, e-Panchayat, Common Service Centres (CSCs), Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), internet connectivity, mobile applications, etc., improve digital accessibility and make governance more transparent, accountable, efficient and provide better public service. These enhancements promote the greater involvement of citizens in local governance and promote easier access to public services and welfare programs that are vital for inclusive and sustainable rural development. The study variables were selected based on the framework, as were the design of the questionnaires, analysis of the data and interpretation of the results.

7. Research Methodology

The present study used Descriptive and Analytical research design to explore the use of technology to enhance the rural governance and development in Panchrukhi Block, Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh. The study area was chosen due to the progressive rollout of government digital initiatives like Digital India, e-Panchayat, Common Service Centres (CSCs), Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and various online platforms that deliver public services. This study used both primary and secondary data. A structured questionnaire was conducted with 103 respondents using google forms as the data collection tool. The sampling technique used was non-probability convenience sampling and the respondents were the rural people, the representatives of the Panchayat and members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and others connected with the local governance system. The questionnaire consisted of four parts: Socio-economic attributes of respondents, Awareness and access to digital technologies, Governance through technology, and

Perceived impacts and challenges of digital governance. The response type of most questions was close-ended and measured with dichotomous and multiple choice answers. Sources of secondary data collected were books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, policy documents, official government websites and other relevant literature on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), e-governance, and rural development. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and tabular analysis were used to analyse the collected data to examine patterns of technology-enabled governance, technology awareness, technology use, and respondents' perceptions of technology-enabled governance. There was no pressure and all participants gave informed consent and confidentiality and anonymity was ensured during the research process.

8. Results and Discussion

8.1 Socio-economic profile of the respondents was found to consist of the following:

The characteristics of socio-economic of the respondents suggest that the study population is relatively young, educated, and digitally connected. The majority of the respondents were 18-30 years of age (61.2%) and the educational category with the highest number of members was the graduates (53.4%). A large percentage of respondents were involved in service activities (45.7%) and a significant percentage had monthly incomes of more than ₹20,000 (41.7%). In addition, 100% had a bank account, over 90% used a debit card or credit card and 94.1% had smartphones, with 92.2% saying they used the internet regularly. The study area has a high potential for digital governance initiatives due to these characteristics, which mean that access to digital infrastructure and financial services is already prevalent. The results indicate that socio-economic conditions like education, financial inclusion and access to digital technology enable citizens to interact with technology enabled governance. The findings are in line with the findings of the earlier researches that state that education and digital literacy have a significant impact on the adoption of e-governance services.

8.2 Awareness and Accessibility of Digital Governance

The study shows a relatively high degree of awareness on the part of the respondents with regard to major digital governance initiatives. A majority of the respondents were familiar with the Digital India campaign (80.6%) and Common Service Centres (80.6%), e-governance services (71.8%) and online Panchayat services (73.8%). The awareness level of Online certificate applications (81.6%), PM-Kisan mobile information (82.5%) and Jan Dhan Yojana (92.2%) was also very high. But, just as with awareness, not all of this awareness leads to use. Only 58.2% were found using the CSC services and 38.8% were using the UMANG application, with only 62.1% availed online portals for pensions and scholarships. The gap suggests that citizens have an overall awareness of digital initiatives, but they still experience barriers to the use of more specific digital platforms. The results suggest that awareness campaigns need to be coupled with more hands-on digital literacy programmes to enhance actual use.

8.3 Technology Adoption in Rural Governance

Technology has emerged as an important tool of communication with Panchayati Raj Institutions and citizens. Majority respondents indicated that they used digital technologies to contact Panchayats (84.5%), pay utility bills online (83.5%), access land records (65.0%), receive welfare benefits via Direct Benefit Transfer (68.9%) and avail services from the Public Distribution System online (87.4%). Besides, 72.8% said that information is shared with the people routinely using digital means and 78.6% said that Panchayats use social media for communication. From these results, it can be concluded that digital governance is becoming part of a local government's administration. The Internet's use and digital payment systems, which are prevalent in today's society, represent the progressive movement of the traditional system of governance to the use of technology for public administration. However, despite the high share of respondents reporting that they could access digital services, the share of those who could trace DBT payments online is comparatively low (37.9%).

8.4 The impact of digital initiatives on rural development as perceived by the actors

The general sentiment of the respondents was overwhelmingly positive on the role of technology in governance and in rural development. Almost all respondents felt that digital services are helpful in saving time (94.2%), reduce cost to access government services (88.3%) and enhance transparency in governance (90.3%). Likewise, 86.4% noted an increase in citizen participation and 87.4% agreed that technology has made welfare schemes more accessible. Over 85% said that digital technologies improve citizens' trust in government institutions and improve the delivery of government benefits. The study also reveals that respondents feel that technology is aiding in the overall developmental outcome. Over 93% felt technology is improving women's engagement in governance and 92.2% believed that the youth are the primary beneficiaries of digital programs, while 98.1% noted better access to education due to digital technologies. Likewise, more than 90 per cent noted improvements in health care services and 87.4 per cent noted the improved agricultural extension services using digital platforms. These results are indicative that technology is not just an administrative instrument but a significant factor in the social and economic development. Interestingly, education was the sector respondents felt was most impacted by technology, followed by health (28.2%) and then comparatively fewer identified governance (6.8%) and agriculture (0.9%) as the primary beneficiaries. That indicates while the digital governance process is advancing, citizens link technological changes with education the most.

8.5 The challenges facing Digital Governance today are outlined under 5.5.

While the respondents' overall perception of the digital governance is positive, it is constrained by certain challenges. The most reported problem was Internet connectivity (87.4%), followed by electricity interruptions

(82.5%). More than half of the respondents considered inadequate digital skills (55.3%) to be an important barrier, while nearly half experienced language-related difficulties while using digital applications. The study also highlights significant social issues connected to the digital inclusion. Of those who believe that women have fewer opportunities to access digital technologies, about 60% do; for elderly citizens, the figure is 93.2% that have difficulties in the use of digital services. Respondents also indicated that the charges for CSC services are relatively high (74.8%) and that there is a need to train government employees on the use of digital (80.6%). These findings show that digital governance needs to be built on technological infrastructure, institutional capacity, affordable service delivery, inclusive design, and a continuous digital literacy programme.

8.6 Discussion

The results reveal that significant strides have been made in the adoption of digital technologies in rural governance and services in Panchpykhi Block. The digital ecosystem has grown significantly in the study area, with high usage of smartphones, internet, financial inclusion and awareness of the major digital initiatives. These results are congruent with earlier studies which indicated that ICTs enhance governance by improving administration (efficient use of time, transparency, accountability, and citizen participation). Yet, the study also reveals that digital inclusion is far more than just infrastructure. Though the awareness of digital governance initiatives is comparatively higher, the use of the advanced platforms like "UMANG", "DigiLocker" and "Online Grievance" are comparatively less. This represents the need to boost digital literacy, user support, and awareness campaigns in parallel with infrastructure development. Furthermore, the internet connectivity, electricity provision, digital skill, language accessibility, and gender and ageing issues issues foreseen as challenges at the outset of digital governance imply that digital governance should be considered as a socio-technical process rather than the introduction of digital platforms. Solving these problems will be key to making the digital governance gains effective for all aspects of rural society. Evidence clearly shows that technology has played a key role in making the governance in the rural areas more robust, thereby contributing to the enhancement of information flows and links between governments and citizens, the facilitation of access to public services, increasing transparency, and inclusive rural development. However, continued investments in digital literacy, institutional ability and infrastructure will be required to realise the long-term gains of technology-enabled governance.

9. Conclusion

This present study focused on the effect of technology in enhancing the rural governance and development in Panchrukhi Block, Kangra District in the State of Himachal Pradesh. The results show that digital technologies have become a crucial aspect of rural governance, with most respondents able to access smartphones, internet, bank accounts, and digital payment facilities. The study area has a favourable starting point for the development of technology enabled governance as indicated by these indicators. The

study also indicates that awareness of the various major digital governance initiatives, like the Digital India campaign, e-Governance services, Common Service Centres (CSCs) and online Panchayat services is comparatively high. The use of digital platforms is not uniform, however, across services. Though CSCs and online governments portal are used by majority of the respondents, the use of apps like DigiLocker and UMANG are comparatively low, the awareness does not always reflect in their regular use. The results also indicate that citizens' access to government information and digital public services has been improved through the use of technology. The habit of owning a smartphone and using the internet regularly suggest that the citizens of rural areas are getting ready for digital governance programs. Meanwhile, differences in adoption rates also suggest that access, application familiarity, and digital literacy are still factors impacting effective use. Overall, the study finds that technology has significant potential to advance rural governance, as it can improve access to public services and help empower citizens. However, the benefits from digital governance at the grassroots level can be maximized by continuing to develop digital literacy, awareness and institutional support.

10. Policy Implications

The results of the study have important implications for policymakers, local governance institutions and development agencies that aim to strengthen digital governance in rural areas.

- 1) **Strengthen Digital Infrastructure:** Increased digital adoption is one thing, but uninterrupted internet / reliable infrastructure will always remain a basic requirement of effective rural governance. Broadband connectivity technology especially in remote and hilly areas need continued investment.
- 2) **Promote Digital Literacy:** There is awareness about some digital initiatives; however, lower use of some (such as Dickey system) indicates that many farmers may need structured digital literacy programmes. Develop digital literacy competences among citizens through regular training organized at Panchayati Raj Institutions, schools, Common Service Centres and community organization.
- 3) **Formalize the Capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutes:** Constant training of field staff to provide services through digital platforms. Transparency, efficiency and citizen satisfaction can be improved through capacity-building programmes for elected representatives as well as Panchayat staff.
- 4) **Raise awareness of the digital platforms of the government:** Organised awareness campaigns need to be taken up by government departments for increased adoption of digital products like DigiLocker, UMANG, online Panchayat services and similar citizen addresses applications. Information sharing must take place through multiple channels of communication- CSCs, local institutions, social media, and village meetings.
- 5) **Strengthen Common Service Centres:** Given that Common Service Centres serve as critical touchpoints for digital governance, enhancing the infrastructure, technical capacity, and service quality of such centres

can improve citizens' access to government services- especially those with low levels of digital literacy.

- 6) **Encourage Citizen Participation:** Experiments with technology have shown that it should not only facilitate the delivery of services but also promote participatory governance. Digital platforms can be deployed for dissemination of Panchayat decisions, collecting feedback citizens, conducting e-Lok Adalats or improving the transparency of local governance processes.
- 7) **Promote Inclusive Digital Governance:** Elderly citizens, people with low formal education and other social disadvantages groups should gain special attention as they are more likely to have difficulties accessing digital services. Specific measures can improve the distribution of digital governance benefits over rural communities.