

F.No.4(140)/2000-WG IT-Masses
Government of India
Ministry of Information Technology
Working Group on IT for Masses
New Delhi-110 003

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HODs / SIOs OF NIC HELD ON 26.5.2000 TO DISCUSS INITIATIVES TAKEN BY CENTRAL / STATE GOVERNMENTS RELATED TO IT FOR MASSES

As NIC provides extensive IT services to various Ministries / Departments of Central and State Governments right up to the level of district administration, NIC HODs and SIOs get involved in most of the initiatives taken by Government at different levels in the country. The meeting with NIC HODs / SIOs was held to take stock of current initiatives being taken by the government at different levels. The meeting was chaired by Dr. B.K. Gairola, DDG, NIC.

2. In his opening remarks, Dr. B. K. Gairola pointed out that the recent steps taken by the government have successfully galvanised IT industry on a high growth path. However, sustenance of this phenomenon will require that benefits of IT should not be confined only to a small segment of people and thus enlarge already existing class based divisions in the society. The real challenge, he felt, before the IT professionals was to see as to how people below poverty line could actually benefit from this technology. In his view, IT can only be an enabler of processes required to be launched in different sectors resulting in all round socio-economic development of the people, particularly those belonging to the deprived classes. With regard to IT education, Dr. B.K. Gairola was of the view that parallel to the growth of the IT education and training sector in the country, we need to seriously consider the ways in which IT could help making people literate in the country.
3. Member-Secretary of the Working Group, Dr. Y.K. Sharma, informed the participants that as NIC has been very closely involved in the computerisation programmes of the government at different levels in the country, inputs from NIC HODs and SIOs will form a very significant component of the study to be undertaken by the Working

Group on current initiatives of the government with regard to IT applications for masses. He advised HODs / SIOs to provide these inputs in consultation with concerned officials in Ministries / Departments of Central Government and State Governments so that these inputs are submitted as a part of inputs from concerned Ministries / Departments and States.

4. SIO, Maharashtra, Mr. D.P. Bobde, joining the discussion through Video Conferencing, mentioned the following three major initiatives taken by Maharashtra government recently:

- (i) Warana Village Project where around 50 applications relevant to local people have been implemented.
- (ii) Project related to Collectorate computerisation which is expected to cover all aspects of functions of the collectorate.
- (iii) Concept of IT based Gram Sachivalaya being pursued by the state government.

Mr. Bobde also pointed out following problems in implementation of mass based IT applications :

- (a) Communication and Power infrastructure in rural areas is not of adequate quality to make such services functional on a sustained basis.
- (b) There is an urgent need of administrative reforms to bring government procedures in line with facilities provided by Information Technology such as authentication and acceptability of electronic documents.

5. Mr. S.P. Rastogi, at the outset, desired that the segment of society to be considered under the term Masses, should be clearly spelt out. In view of the heavy urban bias

in most of the government programmes and its management, he felt that provision of drinking water, post offices, educational and health facilities etc. in rural areas need to be given higher priority. If we intend to take IT to the rural masses, we have to see as to how IT will facilitate provision of such basic amenities to the people in the country.

6. Mr. O.P. Kalra pointed out that number of schemes of NGOs supported by Planning Commission and various ministries related to women and poverty alleviation are launched by government from time to time. There is an urgent need to integrate these schemes for better results and deliverability to the people. He felt that special programmes must be launched as a part of such schemes by NGOs to impart IT related training to women.
7. SIO Uttar Pradesh, Dr. Rakesh Goel, participating in the discussion over Video Conferencing, mentioned the following projects being pursued by the state government:
 - (i) Setting up of Information kiosks, initially in city areas, with information regarding government forms, government schemes, filing of state taxes, and filing of FIR.
 - (ii) Land record computerisation where computerised 'Khatonies' are to be provided to the villagers.
8. SIO Tamil Nadu, Mr. A. Mohan, mentioned the following initiatives being taken by the state government :
 - (i) Land records computerisation as a part of Taluka level computerisation planned by the state government for which 50,000 talukas are to be identified.
 - (ii) Computerisation of registration department; old age pension; computerised Money Orders; Ticketing by State Transport Corporation; commercial taxes where assessee's information will be available in electronic form; payment of water taxes and charges; IT education at school level wherein computers will

be provided to 663 higher secondary schools and Community Internet Services being set up by State Government with private sector participation, are some of the major applications.

9. Mr. D. R. Shukla classified the requirements for systems related to IT for Masses in three categories :
- (i) On demand from masses such as Warana project of Maharashtra
 - (ii) On government initiatives with interface to people such as Information Facilitation Centres set up by Central Government ministries, and
 - (iii) Back-end computerisation in government departments.

In all these areas, he felt, we need to carefully assess the needs of the people for which services are to be offered as well as establish appropriate delivery mechanism which will provide access to the target users.

10. Ms. Naina Pandita explained the relevance of Telemedicine programme where the expertise of highly experienced medical professionals could be made available even in the remotest part of the country with the availability of Internet in those areas. She felt that to begin with Primary Health Centres (PHCs) may be connected to the referral hospitals as a regular system so that experts from these hospitals could be consulted by the PHCs in far flung areas without these experts requiring to travel to those places.
11. Mr. K.V. Ramadoss wanted government institutions and agencies like Panchayats, cooperatives such as Sugar and Dairy, NABARD etc., which are in direct touch with rural areas, to be actively involved in development and delivery of IT services to the rural segments. These agencies must be used as important communication vehicles to carry the messages regarding the benefits of IT to rural masses alongwith information regarding the mechanism which will be available to these masses to avail such benefits.
12. SIO Rajasthan, Ms. Indu Gupta, mentioned the following initiatives being taken by Rajasthan government :

- (i) Setting up of Information kiosks
- (ii) Land records computerisation
- (iii) Ticketing
- (iv) Private initiatives for delivery of mails to remote areas.
- (v) Treasuries computerisation up to sub-treasuries covering individual deposits / securities.

She pointed out that the state government's top priority is to make extensive use of IT in relief works and planning for setting up of drinking water facilities in different parts of the state.

- 13. Mr. H. M. Reddy pointed out the discrepancy in charging pattern of services in remote areas. He felt that either service providers do not give priority to services in remote areas or even if they do so the charges are generally too high compared to the same in urban areas. He wondered whether we need to cross-subsidise these services in some form or force people by law / executive orders not to charge higher rates than in urban areas.
- 14. Dr. Rakesh Gupta mentioned about some of the initiatives taken by the Department of Post. He pointed out that the country has around 160, 000 post offices which could provide a major linkage in semi-urban / rural areas in the country. Some of the IT initiatives recently taken by the department include Postal Life Insurance scheme computerisation, single window counters in post offices, facilitating delivery of Money Order to people through network and providing pension to senior citizens through Post Offices.
- 15. Mr. K. B. S. V. Rao suggested that the Tele-information Centres could provide information regarding results of various examinations and admissions to universities and colleges. These centres could also provide information regarding availability of specialised medical equipment and services at different hospitals in the country.
- 16. Ms. Ranjana Nagpal mentioned that there are 4.5 lakh Fair Price Shops in the country. These shops could be the potential outlets to facilitate delivery of IT based services to the people in rural areas. A pilot project of monitoring of allocation to

Fair Price Shops in H.P., stock position of FCI godowns, monitoring of public grievances for consumer affairs department are some of the major initiatives of the Department of Food recently.

17. SIO Andhra Pradesh, Shri C. S. R. Prabhu highlighted the following IT applications being pursued in A.P. government :
- (i) Registration of properties through CARD system
 - (ii) Mandal level computerisation
 - (iii) Collectorate 2000 project which will integrate all core functions in a collectorate and will be supported by a 50-node Local Area Network
 - (iv) Monitoring of Janam Bhoomi Programme
 - (v) Setting up of APSWAN linking district collectorates with A. P. government secretariat
 - (vi) On-line registration and licensing by transport department
 - (vii) Computerisation of Sales Sax
 - (viii) Setting up of village level Internet Kiosks by private parties
18. SIO Karnataka, Mr. Ram Mohan Rao, mentioned following initiatives of Karnataka government :
- (i) Land Record Computerisation with Record of Right document to be made available on Internet which could then be presented to Banks for getting loan
 - (ii) Interface between Transport and Police departments with the objective to reduce crime and accident rate
 - (iii) Agricultural price system at 250 locations in the state to provide comparative prices at different agricultural marketing yards
 - (iv) Gram Panchayat computerisation under which STPI will set up 100 VSATs at sub-district level with links to secretariat at Bangalore
19. SIO Gujarat, Mr. Rajaneesh Mahajan, mentioned the following projects :
- (i) Incentive scheme for IT training to 10th pass students in which girl students will be provided free training and boys at nominal charges
 - (ii) Special training programmes for government staff at Baroda Collectorate
 - (iii) 1500 Internet Kiosks being set up by a private company .

- (iv) Use of Smart Card in licensing
- (v) Land Record Computerisation
- (vi) Sales Tax Computerisation
- (vii) Data Bank of colleges on Internet
- (viii) Government resolutions on Internet
- (ix) Computerised Check Post
- (x) Centralised registration of employment exchange computerisation in which vacancy position will be available to the people from a central database.

20. SIO M.P., Dr. V. V. S. Rao mentioned about the Gyan Doot project launched by M.P. Government to set up Information Kiosks across the state which will provide information such as Mandi rates, caste certificates etc. In order to make them self-sustaining, these kiosks will be operated by unemployed people on revenue sharing basis.
21. Mr. Brij Bhushan pointed out that quality and timing of information is very crucial. He felt that though Internet is capable of providing information at a very fast pace, in some cases government agencies, inspite of having such information available to them well in time, are not able to take its full advantage. This is partly due to the fact that there is considerable lack of awareness about benefits of IT even within the government.
22. Ms. Nadita Kapila pointed out that with the availability of IT tools it should be possible to standardise various services across the country.
23. Ms. Vandana Sharma wanted extensive use of GIS techniques in planning of infrastructure and services across the country particularly in rural areas.

The meeting ended with the thanks to the Chair.