Chapter 55

Gender Evaluation of Rural E–Governance in India: A Case Study of E–Gram Suraj (E–Rural Good Governance) Scheme

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ABSTRACT

In the present chapter, the author seeks to identify the existing gender gaps in rural e-governance in India and has attempted to explore the factors responsible for these gaps with reference to a rural e-governance scheme in one of the most economically and socially challenged state of India as an illustration to support some of the points sought to be made in the paper. The author argues that in Indian context, where rural women are already less visible in the public sphere due to socio–cultural factors and men already dominate, e-governance is more available and accessible to men. Hence to avoid the emergence of a gender based digital divide in rural governance that would further marginalize the rural women, it is necessary that the potential of ICTs is exploited in such a manner as to address the existing gender issues in rural governance, which are still obstructing women’s way to participate equally in the process. Women’s abilities, needs, perceptions and building women’s capacities to use the ICTs are other important factors that should be given due consideration while planning for rural e-governance to make it meaningful to women.

INTRODUCTION

India is a country dominated by rural population. But even after sixty years of Independence rural areas are marked by severe poverty, illiteracy, lack of health services, lack of employment opportunities and over all backwardness. The condition of women in rural areas is worse as the gender based discrimination with strong socio cultural roots are entrenched and pervasive. In 1993 the Panchayati Raj (Village Level Local
Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) for Information Communication Technology for Development Projects is used for conducting the study. A combination of methods was adopted to collect data that included Personal Interviews, story telling and focused group discussions with various groups of informants. A review of the government records is also done to gather relevant information.

The questionnaire based survey with 56 Sarpanchas in Dongargaon Block of Chhattisgarh state was carried out during 31st May-6th June 2008. The questionnaire contained two sections. The first sections included the information regarding the profile of Sarpanchas. The second section consisted of project related questions, based on six indicators. Information from other informants like technology developers, software developers and government officers is also collected through personal interviews and online discussions. To understand the context and to analyze the data, earlier researches, government policy documents and reports have also been reviewed.