

Governance through better Network Infrastructure: The Trend in Jharkhand

Successful implementation and sustenance of e-Governance programmes for the State will depend on support, guidance and direction at the policy and Implementation level

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After the creation of a new State the Government of Jharkhand has given high importance to improve the socio-economic situation of its people, educate them and familiarise with ICT towards information society. Among others, the use and implementation of Information Technology is recognized as a strategic importance for its people and society in this context in the ICT age. Keeping in mind the point of maximum public interface the Government of Jharkhand is investing towards ICT infrastructure in the State at various levels and areas which include the areas of infrastructure, Internet based applications, establishing new institution and policy formulations. One latest policy step is setting up Common Service Centres (CSCs) across the State providing Internet and other ICT based services.

So far, the State Government has taken regular initiatives in major areas such as human resources, infrastructure, policy regimes, investment cli-

mates etc. In this respect government has been setting new institution and doing computerization of its major departments by rolling different applications regularly on pilot basis in the district with the view that once it stabilizes in pilot district, the State will roll it in each district to reach to its people with minimum hitch.

There are key issues on board. Expanding the IT infrastructure network, quality human resource development, scaling up of projects already implemented, ensuring sustainable outcome of various interventions, and reaching out to the last mile with services are some major challenges.

Key Initiatives

>> Currently in Jharkhand many improvements in IT applications and deployments are underway. Unlike earlier ICT applications, many current applications are web interactive and paper handling is minimal.

- >> Process standardization and simplification by dividing the manual process in logical modules of the application software.
- >> Jharkhand Agency for promotion of Information Technology along with Jharkhand Space Application Centre working in the areas of GIS and software development activity. Some pioneer work has been done by JSAC like Village Information System, Geographical Information System, Space Communication, Urban and Infrastructure Development, Land Records Computerization
- >> Facilitating investment flow with the use and application of ICT with single window clearance
- >> State portals playing important role in regular departmental information dissemination and services like tender information, results of examination
- >> State Wide Area Network Connectivity through Jharnet made available for data, audio and video applications up to block level. Jharnet success will encourage more & more application available at Citizen Service Centre for better service to village people.
- >> Opening of Indian Institute of Information Technology will take care of manpower requirement of the Industry in the State in field of Information Technology. IT Park will create investment climate for software companies.
- >> By encouraging the Public and Private Partnership business Model in ICT activities in public service delivery. For instance involving various State Level Agencies in the State Wide Common Service Centre programme
- >> For State level e-governance projects a provision of a supplementary budget has been provided in the State. A high level committee has been formulated to review the project proposals prepared by PeMT for adherence to State priorities.
- >> Most importantly the State information on Portal will save time and money of citizen which they used to spend visiting different State offices all these days is now available to them which they can further use in other social and self development.

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Initiative towards Network Infrastructure

Jharkhand Government is

taking extra effort in enabling Network infrastructure across the State in no sooner time. Already the State has been implementing the national

JAP-IT

Jharkhand Agency for Promotion of Information Technology was conceptualized to accelerate the growth of Information Technology in Jharkhand and implement the policies of the State Govt. in the area of IT. The broad objectives are to provide IT inputs to Governments Departments, Agencies and to assist them in computerization and networking, to co-ordinate with investors and industry, trade organizations and financial institutions in public and private sector.

programme of State Wide Area Network (SWAN) which is a statewide high-speed communication backbone to ensure voice and data connectivity at all blocks & villages, and high speed internal gateway. Under this Jharkhand State Wide Area Network (JHARNET) the State Government is promoting speed and ease of governance.

Purpose of the SWAN is to leverage Connectivity Benefits; delivery of e-Governance Applications; better monitoring and evaluation; seamless flow of information; availability of Information to people; efficient delivery of services; internal computerisation and

information flow. Overall, the State ICT infrastructure is focused on four key components: Data Centre, State Jharkhand State Wide Area Network (JHARNET), Block to Panchayat Connectivity (BPC) and Common Service Centres (Pragya Kendras).

Since 2005 Jharnet is being implemented across the State to modernise the government's communication network to act as a information superhighway. In this direction a state of the art State Data Centre is being built by the Government of Jharkhand to ensure the security, integrity and availability of data with all government departments through a secured centralised data hosting facility. The network is implemented on the modified Build Own Operate and Transfer (BOOT) financial model for a period of 5 years.

Jharkhand takes the pride of being the first State in the entire country to implement the scheme of Common Service Centre (CSC). Steps have been taken to set up 4,562 CSCs throughout all the panchayats in the State in first phase and 872 CSCs in second phase to provide e-Governance and other value added services. These CSCs, named Pragya Kendras in Jharkhand, seek to transform rural areas through the use of ICT and web based applications and deliver all hosts of government and private services to the rural people at their doorsteps.

Leveraging ICT for Sustainable e-Governance

The introduction of ICT to

government presents an opportunity to provide government services to a wider audience at a lower cost of availing services. This enables provisioning of satisfactory services to a larger number of people without the need to open more physical offices and recruiting more staff thereby improving efficiency and productivity of government. The savings thus made may be ploughed back into the welfare and development activities of the government.

The Jharkhand Government has undertaken a wide ranging and well thought out roadmap. Instead of ad-hoc computerization, the state has leveraged cost benefit analysis to prioritize the revenue generation and citizen interfacing departments for e-Governance initiatives so as to maximize the returns on the money spent on e-Governance and build support for e-Governance by showing tangible results. Some of the successful initiatives are listed below:

1. **Common Service Centres (CSCs):** Jharkhand is the pioneer State in the country to set up 4,562 CSCs throughout all the panchayats in Jharkhand to provide G2C and B2C services.
2. **JharNet (SWAN):** JharNet

is the backbone network for voice, data and video communication throughout the State of Jharkhand.

3. **Jharkhand Portal:** A single point entry portal for the State of Jharkhand for providing government information and services to citizens and businesses.
4. **FileTracker:** Its main objective is to replace the manual record keeping system for files and letters with a more efficient paperless automated system.
5. **Digitization of Khatiyans and Register:** Unicode-based application software has been developed for the Land Record Computerization in the State. The pilot project successfully completed
6. **Integrated Online Commercial Taxes System:** Dealer information system, Tax accounting information system, Assessment information system, Return processing system, & other departmental functions
7. **Tender Information System:** An internet based application has been developed and deployed that enables publishing information about tenders, sending the information on tenders of interest to registered private play-



ers, uploading of tender documents etc.

8. **Employment Exchange computerization:** An online system for registration and renewal of registration at employment exchanges has been developed.
9. The state has planned to train at least 25 to 30 e-governance Champions amongst State officials and to make them responsible to implement the e-governance roadmap of Jharkhand.

Identifying key challenges

There are concerns that connectivity issue is holding back key networking based governance applications. Developing quality human resource is a challenge. Until and unless the State has put greater efforts in education and information literacy it would be difficult to bridge digital divide in the State and facilitate development. The challenge is to reduce gaps in poor access to computers and information and communication technology amongst

large section of the State population who are living in the periphery of the State's social and economic set ups. Then there are the content barriers in terms of facilitating local language digital content in meeting information and communication needs of the local population.

Successful implementation and sustenance of e-Governance programmes for the State will depend on support, guidance and direction from the top staff of various

state departments. The need was felt to train officials occupying decision making levels and managerial posts who will be trained as 'e-Champions' to be equipped with necessary skills to lead the successful implementation of e-governance projects in the state.

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Digital Inclusion



Digital inclusion of the marginalised is materialised with these muslim girls (all of them in burqa) at a basti in Hyderabad where till recently they were not even allowed to step out of their homes. Technology For The People (TFTP) is the organisation behind this effort. At the centre, muslim girls are taught animation on computers as shown in the photo above in addition being encouraged to regularise their normal education in schools. After the initial training they do fantastically well and at least 10-15 of them are employed at one animation company and earn Rs. 5000 to Rs. 10000 and prove that ICT offers a huge opportunity for the marginalised community to leapfrog into the mainstream