

CONTRIBUTION OF GOVERNMENT MANAGED INFORMATION KIOSKS IN CREATING COMPUTER LITERACY AMONG RURAL YOUTH

P.S. Slathia* and Narinder Paul**

ABSTRACT

Present investigation was carried out in purposively selected 5 blocks each of Jammu and Kathua Districts of Jammu Division to study the contribution of government managed Community Information Centres (CICs) in creating computer literacy among rural youth and opinion of the beneficiaries towards CICs. Study sample consisted of 80 CIC beneficiaries. It has been found that a significant number of rural youth have been benefitted from the CICs and these centres have been found to play a pivotal role in imparting computer literacy among the rural youth of Jammu. Maximum number of CIC users were reported from CIC Samba and minimum number from CIC Basholi. About 80 percent of the rural youth were found to get e-employment information from these centres. Besides, these have also been found to contribute in a big way for entrepreneurship development among rural youth. Majority of the respondents i.e. 68.75 percent had the most favourable opinion towards CICs.

INTRODUCTION

The top priority of the Indian government is to introduce and materialize the concept of e-governance across the country. E-governance offers the facility of applying on-line for documents or getting information from a government office or establishment from the comfort of one's home or cyber-cafe. The government has already created e-governance applications for many departments. To make use of e-governance to the best possible level, it is necessary that the people must have proper knowledge and skill of information technology (IT). In this regard, Ministry of information technology, Government of India has taken a concrete initiative by setting up government managed information kiosks in North-Eastern states and Jammu and Kashmir on project basis and has named them Community Information Centres (CICs).

The Community Information Centre (CIC) Project envisages application of information technology (IT) to deliver service to citizens such as e-governance, e-learning, telemedicine, web access, internet services, real time market access e-

commerce, e-education, e-procurement, requests-employment notifications and grievance redressal through e-facility. These government run information kiosks work as an interface between public and government and provides the citizens easier access to socio-economic databases. Various citizen centric services such as teleconsultation, on-line issue of certificates etc. are being offered through CICs. It has been immensely observed that the young boys and girls residing in sub-urban and rural areas categorically require the computer related knowledge and skills to face the existing as well as emerging challenges in their career development. It has also been envisaged that CICs will serve as a nodal centre at block level to hone the computer related skills of rural youth by providing them demand driven computer education on paid basis.

In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Community Information Centres (CICs) scheme was launched in June, 2004 at block level on project basis. Keeping entire background in perspective, the present study was conducted with the following specific objectives:

* Assistant Professor, Division of Agriculture Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agriculture Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), Main Campus Chatha, Jammu, J&K.

** Agriculture Extension Officer, Department of Agriculture Production, J&K Govt. Seed Multiplication Farm Burmal (Hiranagar), Kathua, J&K.

1. To study the contribution of community information centres (CICs) in creating computer literacy among rural youth.
2. To study opinion of community information centre (CIC) beneficiaries towards structure and functioning of CICs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in purposively selected Jammu division of Jammu and Kashmir state. Out of ten districts in the said division, two districts viz; Kathua and Jammu were selected for carrying out the present research pursuit. Five blocks from each of the selected districts were randomly selected in the next stage of study. In all 10 Community Information Centres (CICs) functioning at block level were selected from two districts selected for study. Totally 8 CIC users from each selected Community Information Centre were selected randomly thereby constituting a sample of 80 CIC users. The data were collected on a comprehensively designed schedule by personal interview. Besides, the secondary data from the CICs were also studied and analyzed to arrive at the inferences. The data collected from the CIC users were collated accordingly and the results have been presented in the subsequent tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

(a) **Contributory role of Community Information Centres (CICs) in creating computer literacy among rural youth-** The contribution of Community Information Centres (CICs) in creating computer awareness among rural youth of their respective operational areas has been presented under the following heads:

(i) **Computer training programmes conducted for rural youth at CICs in Jammu district:**

A perusal of data incorporated in table 1 reveals that since the inception of community information centres, 418 rural youth have been imparted training in different need based short duration courses of computer by the selected community information centres of Jammu district. A further deep glance at the table 1 shows. CIC-wise contribution of these centres in imparting computer education to rural youth CIC-block samba had imparted CCC (course on computer concepts) and basic training to 114 rural youth, followed by CIC Bishnah which had trained 87 rural youth. Besides CIC R.S.Pura, Purmandal and Vijaypur had imparted training to 86, 79 and 52 rural youth respectively. The results vividly depicts that the community information centres (CICs) are playing a pivotal role in imparting computer education among rural youth in J&K.

Table 1. Computer training programmes conducted for rural youth at CICs in Jammu district

S. No	Name of the CIC/Block	Name of course	Duration of course	No. of batches	No. of participants
1	Vijaypur	CCC	3 months	1	04
		Basic course	1 month	1	09
		Basic course	2 months	3	39
2	R.S.Pura	CCC	3 months	2	15
		Basic course	3 months	8	71
3	Purmandal	CCC	3 months	1	05
		Bc+ Internet course	3 months	5	59
		Internet course	½ month	2	15
4	Bishnah	CCC	3 months	1	16
		Bc+ Internet course	3 months	5	71
5	Samba	CCC	3 months	2	25
		Basic Course	3 months	7	89
Total					418

(ii) **Computer training programmes conducted for rural youth at CICs in Kathua district:**

Data presented in table 2 reveal that 276 youth

had been trained by the selected CICs of Kathua district in varied computer programmes. Further, it has been found that maximum numbers of computer

training courses were conducted by CIC Barnoti for 83 rural youths. This was followed by CICs Hiranagar, Kathua and Ghagwal which had imparted computer training to 76, 47 and 42 rural youths, respectively. It has been found that minimum number of youths (28) was trained in computer

basics by CIC Basholi. From other CICs of Kathua district under study, it can also be observed that the basic computer courses of varied durations i.e. 1 month, 2 months and 3 months are being conducted by these CICs for greater advantage to rural youth and to spread computer awareness among them.

Table 2. Computer training programmes conducted for rural youth at CICs in Kathua district

S. No	Name of CIC/Block	Name of course	Duration of course	No. of batches	No. of participants
1	Kathua	CCC,	3 months	1	07
		Basic course	3 months	4	40
2	Barnoti	CCC,	3 months	3	28
		Basic course	3 months	5	55
3	Basholi	CCC,	3 months	1	02
		Basic course	3 months	3	2
4	Hiranagar	CCC	3 months	1	08
		Basic course	1 month	6	32
		Basic course	2 months	1	06
5	Ghagwal	Basic course	3 months	3	30
		Basic course	3 months	10	42
Total					276

(iii) Internet access at community Information Centres by rural clients:

A perusal of data incorporated in the table no 3 reveals that since the inception of community information centres under study, the total number of 8400 rural youths have availed

the internet facility in selected CICs of Jammu and Kathua district. Maximum numbers of internet user were reported from CIC samba 1891. Contrarily, internet uses in CIC Basholi was found to be minimum 321 amongst the studied CICs.

Table 3. Internet access at community Information Centres by rural clients

S. No	Name of Community Information Centre/Block	No. of Internet users per CIC
1	Vijaypur	514
2	R.S.Pura	1077
3	Purmandal	392
4	Bishnah	1187
5	Samba	1891
6	Kathua	523
7	Barnoti	762
8	Basholi	321
9	Hirannagar	1015
10	Ghagwal	718
Total		8400

(iv) Contributory role of Community Information Centres (CICs) in rural upliftment:

Data incorporated in table 4 vividly corroborate that CICs have helped in a big way in creating information technology among the rural youths as has been agreed upon by majority of interviewed CIC users to an extent of 96.67 MPS. This has been followed by the CICs in providing e-

employment notification to rural youth with the calculated value of mean percent score 80. Besides, e-edutainment (MPS 70) was another important contribution of community information centre for rural youth. The contribution of these centres in compilation of socio-economic database also came to the extent of 68.34 MPS followed by their contribution in promotion of entrepreneurship development among rural youths to an extent of

63.34 MPS. Besides, among the contributory studied the poor contribution of CICs was found in relation to utilization of these centre for weather related

information by the rural people 25 MPS and utilization of these centre to get market access by rural people to the tune of 24.67 MPS.

Table 4. Contributory role of Community Information Centres (CICs) in rural upliftment

S. No.	Role statement	Mean Percent Score (MPS)	Rank
1.	Information technology awareness among rural youth	96.67	I
2.	Market access for rural youth	24.67	VII
3.	Access to weather related information	25.00	VI
4.	e-employment notification for rural youth	80.00	II
5.	To provide entertainment	70.00	III
6.	Compilation of socio-economic data	68.34	IV
7.	Entrepreneurship development among rural youth	63.33	V

(b) Opinion of community information centres (CICs) beneficiaries towards structure and functioning of CICs:

The opinion based assessment of CIC beneficiaries has been studied under the following heads:

(i) Distribution of CIC beneficiaries on the basis of their opinion towards community information centres:

A perusal of data contained in table no 5 reveals that majority of CIC beneficiaries (68.75%) had the most favorable opinion towards community information centre (CIC) project.

Table 5. Distribution of CIC beneficiaries on the basis of their opinion towards community information centres

S. No.	Opinion category	No. of respondents(f)	Percentage (%)
1	Most favorable (>28.97)	55	68.75
2	Favorable (13.07-28.97)	23	28.75
3	Least favorable (< 13.07)	02	02.50
Total		80	100.00

It was followed by more than one fourth (28.75) % of them having favorable opinion towards the community information centres (CIC). However, it is highly encouraging to record that only 2.5% beneficiaries had least favorable opinion towards

the community information centres (CIC). These three categories have been framed on basis of calculated value of mean and standard deviation of the opinion score obtained by the respondents.

(ii) Opinion based assessment of the beneficiaries towards structure and functioning of community information centres:

An observation to the data incorporated in table 6 reveal that 81.67 percent of the CIC users trusted that these centres put forward their hand in meeting the requirement of rural people interested in learning to use the internet and other web based services. A vast majority of beneficiaries 77.50 MPS believed that information and training provided by the CIC make rural people aware and open new avenues of employment for rural youths. This was followed by high degree of favorable opinion of the respondents regarding contribution of CICs in providing really accessible market intelligence information to the potential farmers to an extent of 75.83 MPS. Besides majority of CIC users (70.41MPS) believed that content of theory and practice offered by community information centres is well balanced. Contrarily, it has been found that 69.58% of the respondents believed that CICs are not helping to make critical data bases available to rural people it is to be properly understand that 69.17% of the CICs users opined that infrastructure facility available at CICs are in sufficient to carry out proposed programme. Many users complain that they have to wait for 1-3 hours for their turn to make use of facility at CICs. 67.50% of the respondents believed that due to breakdowns CIC are rarely operation able as such the farmers and rural youths are

dependent on print media for information, 65% of the respondents were of the view that many time market information is misleading due to variety of options available and 64.58 percent responded that excessive information provided through web access by CICs create dilemma regarding farming practices to be adopted. In addition to it, 55 percent of the CIC users pointed out that the fee structure of training programmes and internet surfing is not affordable, 53.75 percent replied that the duration

of training programmes/courses is sufficient to acquire computer literacy, 52.50 percent opined that these centre provide accessibility to agricultural information for the farmers to get the information related to their vocation, 44.15 MPS of them had firm opinion that bits and bytes of internet operation are not easy to learn for rural youths and 37.50 percent beneficiaries responded that CIC are not streamlined to cater the needs of whole population and area of blocks.

Table 6. Opinion based assessment of the beneficiaries towards structure and functioning of community information centres

S. No.	Opinion Statement	Mean percent score(MPS)	Rank
1	Information and training provided by CICs open new avenues of employment for rural youth	77.50	II
2	Duration of training programmes/courses is sufficient to acquire computer literacy	53.75	XI
3	Content of theory and practical of training programmes offered by CIC is well balanced	70.41	IV
4	Infrastructural facilities and staff at CICs are insufficient to carry out proposed programmes	69.17	VI
5	Fee structure for training programmes and internet surfing is not affordable	55.00	X
6	CICs put forward its hand in meeting the requirement of rural people interested in learning to use the web services	81.67	I
7	CICs are not helping to make the critical database available to rural people	69.58	V
8	These centres provide accessibility for the farmers to agricultural information	52.50	XII
9	Market intelligence information is readily accessible for potential farmers through CICs	75.83	III
10	Excessive information provided by CICs create dilemma regarding farming practices to be adopted	64.58	IX
11	Many times market information available at websites is misleading	65.00	VIII
12	Due to breakdowns, the CICs are rarely operational as such the farmers are dependent for information on print and mass media	67.50	VII
13	The bits and bytes of internet operation are not very easy to learn	44.16	XIII
14	CICs are not streamlined to cater the needs of whole population and area of block	37.50	XIV

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the findings of the study that CIC project has been successfully implemented in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and has generated a lot of interest among the people of the state. Moreover, the project has obtained significant response from rural youths. It has contributed significantly in providing rural people access to information regarding agriculture, marketing, employment opportunities etc besides providing computer literacy among rural people through short term need based computer training

courses. Large number of rural youths have undergone different type and duration of computer training courses at CICs. The different type of courses offered by CIC include CCC, Internet learning course and basic computer course of 1 month, 2 months, 3 months etc.

The community information centers (CIC's) have provided ample opportunities for rural youth to learn the fundamentals of computer science and acquire computer literacy at reasonable rates. Such short duration computer courses are also very helpful to the rural youth in their future educational

endeavours and job placement. Computer education, which was a distant dream for the remote and far-flung areas of trouble torn and militancy affected state of Jammu & Kashmir has become a common feature of rural society.

The community information centres (CICs) have helped in a big way in creating computer awareness among rural youth. The crucial aspect of the study is that the farmers' society has been little benefitted by these centres. The reason might be lack of awareness among farming community regarding usefulness of these centres for them and their vocations. Besides backwardness of the farming community regarding Information technology (IT) may be another added reason. As it has been investigated in the CIC project that these centres would enable the farmers to get inputs, credit, improved cultivars and marketing related information at their block headquarters. It is expected that in the days to come, CICs would enable more farmers centric services in addition to their present day contribution.

The existing structural set up and functioning of community information centre (CICs) have been most favourably rated by majority of the beneficiaries. These results are obvious as every need oriented; time focused and demands driven

activity/programme/project is expected to yield positive opinion from the intended beneficiaries/end users. The J&K citizen seeking training and education in computer holding and basic are very enthusiastic about this project which has resulted in setting up computer infrastructure at block level. Besides it is facilitating the global village concept as CICs are being used as a means for communicating with far away friend, distant located family members and getting global information. With postal services providing snail mail, the internet facility available with CICs rescues impatient families and friends with access to internet communication via e-mail, chat etc. Families and friends can even see their loved ones via web camera provided at these communities information centres (CICs). The overall inferences are that the community information centres (CICs) have proven to be a boon for the ruralites of J&K.

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