Felicitating VLEs

The maxim effective communication is the key to success, holds true for any citizen welfare project involving multiple stakeholders. By felicitating 25 top performing VLEs at the 14th National Conference on e-Governance in Aurangabad, Maharashtra – held between February 10-11, 2011 – the Department of Information Technology and CSC SPV have sought to firmly recognize role of the Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) community and to communicate that they form a vital stakeholder under the Common Services Centers (CSC) Scheme. The atmosphere at the Conference venue was charged with joy and expectation.

Other components of the communication strategy going to be followed by CSC SPV are:

1. A Facebook Page where VLEs can participate on an ongoing basis along with other Scheme stakeholders.
2. An annual VLE Convention in New Delhi, that will provide VLEs a platform to discuss issues, share best practices and recommend suggestions towards strengthening of the CSC network. An Annual awards ceremony to recognize and felicitate the Best performers based on data from Online Monitoring Tool (OMT).
3. A circulation of VLE email distribution list, which would enable the VLE community to communicate with their fellow colleagues.

It is also important to receive feedback on any issues which concern them. The Online Monitoring Tool (OMT) is perhaps the best way for DIT to maintain a healthy communication channel with these change agents at the grassroots.

It is here that the need for each and every VLE registering on the OMT Tool is of vital importance. OMT also remains the only transparent way for DIT to keep contact with the VLEs.

We encourage all VLEs to work with their Service Centre Agencies (SCA) and fellow VLEs to install the OMT tool (user guide available at: http://www.csclive.in/UserGuideH/userguide.html) and update relevant information, using your OMT login details on www.csclive.in. For any questions related to OMT, do not hesitate to talk to your local SCA representative or write to helpdesk@csclive.in.

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CSC Implementation Status

Snippets from the CSC ecosystem...

1. **Jharkhand**: State Bank of India launched online kiosk banking. This will now enable NREGA wage disbursal through the Pragya Kendra located in Baro panchayat, Kanke block, Ranchi.

2. **Jharkhand**: VLEs in the State have been appointed as Para-legal advisors by the District Legal Services Agency of Palamu.

3. **Tamil Nadu**: TNeGA launched SSDG & State portal to provide online single window access of government to citizens services through CSCs. E-Forms are too going to be available.

4. **Tamil Nadu**: The first CSC of Nilgiris district (an e-district) of the State was inaugurated.

5. **Bihar**: Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Nitish Kumar announced that the CSCs will be housed at Panchayat Bhavans of all the 8,463 panchayats. CM also said that will act as nodal agency for service delivery under the Right to Services Act.


7. **Service Centre Agency, AISECT launched its portal** to make quality education, ICT-based services more accessible.

8. **The Union Budget this year announced** that broadband will connect all 2.5 Lakh Gram Panchayats in three years.

*Due to termination of SCAs in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, UP and Uttarakhand around 4700 CSCs are reported to be non-operational*
The 14th National Conference on e-Governance was a grand event this year too. Year after year, the Conference has been serving as a platform for various stakeholders in citizen centric projects to exchange ideas, experiences and best practices in implementation of e-Governance projects and also to deliberate on improving public services through use of information & communication technology (ICT) in rural India.

Organised jointly by Department of Information Technology, Government of India, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India and Department of Information Technology, Government of Maharashtra the two day event was inaugurated by Maharashtra Governor Shri K. Sankaranarayan. During the inaugural session, the Governor emphasized on the role of ICT solutions in improving the delivery and accessibility of e-services in rural India. Shri Sankaranarayan said that e-governance projects will go a long way in ensuring transparency in administration.

During the inaugural session, the other dignitaries present included the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Prithviraj Chavan, Union Minister of State for Public Grievances, Planning and Parliamentary Affairs, Shri V. Narayansami, Additional Secretary, Shri Shankar Aggarwal, DIT, Ministry of Communications and IT amongst others. Talking about the importance of Unique Identity Project in ensuring delivery of public services in the country, Maharashtra CM said that “IT is all set to change the service delivery mechanism.” Besides the inaugural session four Plenary sessions went well with the overall theme of the year’s conference on ‘Rural e-Service Delivery Status and Challenges’. Primarily, the discussions aimed at taking a stock of where India stands on the e-Governance roadmap. An exhibition too was a part of the event, where ICT solutions were showcased. Also, like each year National e-Governance Awards were given in seven categories, to recognize faces that have been making a difference on ground by promoting excellence in implementation of e-governance initiatives. Along with the Awards ceremony, DIT and CSC SPV organised a Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) Felicitation program, a detailed report of which is on the next page.
Leadership only provides the spark. History tells us it’s the people at the grassroots, who eventually build and sustain revolutions. For rural India, which had for long remained untouched by e-Governance, agents of that revolution had to emerge from amongst its own people.

The Common Services Centers (CSC) scheme was launched by the Government of India in 2006 under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) to promote the vision of encouraging rural entrepreneurship and leadership. The responsibility of each CSC was entrusted to the Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) - the basic building block of the project—working at the grassroots. The VLEs are truly sparking off an e-Governance revolution all across rural India.

The 14th National Conference on e-Governance, held at Aurangabad from February 10-11 was good time to felicitate them. Out of thousands of VLEs working towards the common goal of making the CSC Scheme a great success, 25 from all over the country, had been selected using the Online Monitoring Tool (OMT), a performance monitoring software meant for CSCs. These 25 CSCs recorded 100% uptime for the period between August 1, 2010-January 19, 2011.

Each VLE was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation, and a cash reward of Rs 10,000. For many VLE’s, the cash reward would have been equivalent to, or perhaps even more than an entire month’s earnings. But it was not so much about money as it was about the recognition they got at a national forum.

Their faces were beaming with joy as they were individually congratulated and photographed with Shri Shankar Aggarwal, Additional Secretary, DIT, Government of India. Other dignitaries who met the VLEs were Governor of Maharashtra, Shri K. Sankaranarayanan, and the chief guest Shri Prithviraj Chauhan, Chief Minister, Government of Maharashtra.

Such occasions are now expected to be a regular feature, not just at the annual National Conference, but also at similar state level functions.
First Take: An Interaction with the VLE

The VLE Felicitation programme gave the Central CSC SPV team an opportunity to interact with its real brand ambassadors at the grassroots, the village level entrepreneurs (VLE). Out of 25 identified VLEs, 22 attended the event. The event gave the CSC team a chance to further strengthen the communication network with the VLE community, and also to understand the issues and challenges they face being a part of the CSC Scheme, and the impact CSCs have had on their lives. The responses were not only moving but enlightening.

What does the VLE want?

Rakesh Khajuria, a VLE from Jammu and Kashmir, travelling with three other VLE friends from the State expressed his desire to keep a proper communication channel open with the fellow VLEs from other states. He said, “This is a great start by CSC SPV, because we are not only getting recognition at the national level, but also getting a chance to interact with fellow VLEs from all over the country.”

Khajuria suggested that DIT should enable a regular annual function for the VLEs to share their experiences with the Government too. Ishfaq U. Rehman Bhat, from J&K nods in agreement, he added that there is a need to ensure a communication flow with the DIT, GOI. “The two way information flow from VLEs to DIT and from DIT to VLEs directly will go a long way in ensuring the success of the Scheme.”

Manish Khatri, a VLE from Uttar Pradesh further added, “We also want the Government to make available the contact details of all key Central Government employees to communicate better.” He said, “When VLEs communicate their issues to the Central Government, Senior DIT officers must ensure that a hearing date is fixed to readdress the issue.”

Some VLEs also cited lack of awareness among the villagers as a major lacuna in the Scheme’s progress. Dibyadarshi Biswal from Orissa said, “There is need to create more awareness through TV and radio about the Scheme.” His counterpart from the same State, Manamohan Prusty too expressed the need to organize more awareness campaigns.

Almost all the VLEs urged the Government to enable more and more G2C services through their CSCs. Currently, most of the VLEs earn in the range of Rs 3000-10000, but as more services are enabled, their income too is expected to go up.

Summarizing opinions, Pranay Kumar and Shashidhar K Gupta, from Bihar said that the Government should focus on providing more services and making the existing number of VLEs and villagers their CSCs are serving happy rather than focusing on inviting more VLEs to join the scheme. “If services come, automatically it will attract and encourage more VLEs to come forward to join the Scheme.” Indeed, it is this feedback from the VLE community that will in the long run set the tone for the success of the CSC project.

25 Top Performing VLEs (SCA-Wise)

- Sri Sahaj
  - Pranay Kumar, Daudnagar, Bihar
  - Shashidhar Kumar Gupta, Gahiri kothi, Bihar
  - Preeti Singh, Jharsusuda Municipality, Orissa
  - Dibydarshi Biswal, Astarang, Orissa
  - Manamohan Prusty, Suhagpur, Orissa
  - Mohanish Ranjan, Dildar Nagar, Uttar Pradesh
  - Awadesh Verma, Harpalpur, Uttar Pradesh
  - Manish Khatri, Binapur, Uttar Pradesh
  - J&K Bank
  - Mohammad Abbas Wani, Jammu & Kashmir
  - Ishfaq-Ur-Rehman Bhat, Jammu & Kashmir
  - Mushtaq Ahmed Lone, Jammu & Kashmir
  - Ritu Kumari, Jammu & Kashmir
  - Rakesh Khajuria, Jammu & Kashmir
  - KSIITM
  - Bindhu Mol, Mannanchery, Kerala
  - Lalkumar. B, Chunakara, Kerala
  - Haleel Rehman MB, Changanacherry, Kerala
  - CMS Computers
  - Atul Uddhavrao Rakshale, Lohara, Maharashtra
  - Ratna Jain, Khatoli, Rajasthan
  - SPANCO Ltd.
  - Sanjay Gopal Gaikwad, Kon Gaon, Maharashtra
  - Rahul Manilal Vadhan, Talao Pali, Maharashtra
  - BASIX
  - K. Satya Narayan Patro, Aska, Orissa
  - GNG Trading Ltd.
  - Rajesh Kumar, Jukhala, Himachal Pradesh
  - Zoom Developers
  - Bibekanda Tripathy, Guruganguli, Orissa
  - Reliance Communications
  - Bhagyashree Kapale, Nanda, Maharashtra
  - AISECT
  - Kamal Prasad Chandra, Kirit, Chhattisgarh
The VLE Corner

Impacting Lives

Manish Khatri, UP: “My CSC has been able to generate curiosity about computer education among children in the villages.”
Ratna Jain, Rajasthan: “Villagers don’t have to stand in long queues for paying their electricity, water and other bills.”
Mohamed A. Wani, J&K: “My CSC has given hope to the villagers about services being delivered right at their doorstep.”
Manamohan Prusty, Orissa: “Before my CSC was started, villagers had to go as far as 70 Km to get their railway tickets done, but now it’s available right at their doorstep.”
Ishfaq-ur-Rehman-Bhat, J&K: “Mostly students are getting benefited as they are able to get easy Internet access, timely information on education courses, exam results. They also get to apply for jobs online.”
Dibyadarshi Biswal, Orissa: “My villagers are very happy with e-ticketing and video conferencing services.”
Rakesh Khajuria, J&K: “Villagers are happy with benefits like Internet connectivity, especially students.”
Preeti Singh, Orissa: “E-Ticketing is very much appreciated in my locality.”
Pranay Kumar, Bihar: “CSCs have made it much easier to spread information about various Govt. Scheme.”

Common Challenges As Reported By VLEs

1. Applying for BSNL connection every time means a visit to the district collector office, for which VLEs end up paying from their own pockets.
2. Connectivity, and also some are seeking to get more cooperation from the SDA.
3. Connectivity, lack of awareness about Scheme.
4. Lack of awareness about services that the CSCs offer.
5. Internet speed is very slow, services provided by Bank via Suvidha services not doing well, and also high rate of interest on loans.
6. Electricity is a huge problem. Also there is slow guidance from the State Designated Agency (SDA)

The Services Pie

Common Services currently being offered: Domicile certificate, character certificate, birth & death certificates, voter id card, photocopy, mobile recharge, LIC premium payment, Nivas Parman Patra, e-learning, DTH recharge, railway reservation, air ticket, mobile recharge, bill payment (for telephone, water and electricity), old age pension, smart card, pan card, general insurance, health insurance, four/two wheeler insurance, matrimonial, financial services.

Most desirable services in some states: Banking services like demand drafts/saving and withdrawal accounts, electoral identity card, ration cards, banks accounts, agriculture services, death & birth certificate, pan cards, ration cards, passport, unique ids, tax filings.

Support From SCAs

Sanjay Gaikwad, Spanco: “Gives information about launch of new services.”
Manish Khatri, Srei Sahaj: “Not much support coming.”
Ratna Jain, CMS: “Time to time monitoring is done; is very helpful, and we are informed about new schemes.”
Manamohan Prusty, Srei Sahaj: “All kind of support is given.”
Mushtaq Ahmad Lone, J&K Bank: “Appreciable support comes from the SCA.”
K Satya Narayan Rao, Basix: “My SCA is doing good in terms of providing livelihood to the rural people as the overall CSC Scheme intends to do.”
Pranay Kumar, Srei Sahaj: “We do get help, but much less than our expectations.”
Picture Gallery: VLE Felicitation
You can also follow us on id CSC_India and page www.facebook.com/cscscheme. VLEs are encouraged to sign-up on these page and participate in the discussions.