

Information and Communication Technology for Good Governance: A Study of e-Mitra Implementation in Rajasthan

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Abstract

The article focuses on upon the policy initiation of the Government of Rajasthan through Information and Communication Technology to achieve good governance in the State. Citizen friendly project e-Mitra is reviewed in depth to analyse its objectives, framework and issues. It also discussed the benefits, problems and future goals of the project. e-Mitra has been successful in increasing transparency, accountability, reducing corruption and red tapism in the state of Rajasthan, besides giving convenience to the common man. The secondary data presented in the paper has been collected for the period 2011- 2014. The data reveals that 17.68 billion rupees were collected as revenue during 2013 through e-Mitra transactions. In spite of such good returns the government needs to strengthen its training and publicity mechanism as well as have better monitoring of affairs for perfect implementation of e-Mitra to achieve the goal of good governance.

Keywords: Common service centre (CSC/e-Mitra), digital certificate, e-governance, good governance, information and communication technology, stake holders

Introduction

Among many technologies of the present time, the progress made in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is believed to be a revolution with profound influence mainly on economic development. Rapid advancements in ICT are making it economically feasible to collect, store, process and transmit information at breathtaking speed, reduce costs, particularly, the transaction cost, raise productivity and increase economic welfare (Prabhu, 2012).

A vision for Rajasthan defines that the State leverages Information & Communication Technology to attain a position of leadership and excellence in the information age and transforms it into a knowledge society. The idea has been to use information technology to improve the quality of life of its residents and help them achieve higher income and employment. It also seeks to accelerate e-Governance at all levels of the government to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability in the Government – Citizen interfaces (Arora, et al., 2008). With a view to deploy IT for the benefit of the citizens of the states, the Government of Rajasthan launched two citizen-friendly projects in the year 2002, namely LokMitra and JanMitra (www.rajasthan.gov.in). The pilot LokMitra centres were established at Jaipur and catered to the needs of the urban populace. The JanMitra was piloted at Jhalawar and provided services to the rural populace. These projects

have provided an integrated e-platform through which the urban and the rural population of Rajasthan can get the desired information and utilize services related to various government departments under one roof.

The success of these initial pilots led the government to enhance and expand the scope of these projects, both in terms of geographical reach and number of services. This vision gave birth to e-Mitra in the year 2005. The e-Mitra Project integrates LokMitra and JanMitra initiatives into a unified platform aimed at bringing Government closer to citizens in a multi-service single-window experience.

e-Mitra

e-Mitra, is an ambitious e-Governance initiative of Government of Rajasthan, which is being implemented in all 33 districts of the state using Public- Private Partnership (PPP) model. It enhances transparency and makes it convenient to the citizens by delivering the services almost at their door step. It aims to use an e-platform to provide all the government information and services to the rural and the urban masses at a single window through centres and kiosks on a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. The scope of services that can be provided through e-Mitra centres is not limited only to the State Government domain but also includes services of central government departments and private sector organizations like LIC, BSNL, mobile phone service providers etc. In private domain, it provides payment services for cable TV, insurance, ticket booking, gram haat, telemedicine, tele-education, internet access, etc.

A similar project has been implemented through Common Service Centres (CSCs), under the National e-Governance plan, Government of India by setting up 6,626 number of CSCs in the rural areas of Rajasthan which is managed by women entrepreneurs. The CSCs are being set up under the brand name of e-Mitra.



Fig. 1. Objectives of e-Mitra

The goal of e-Governance projects is to provide wide range of citizen-friendly services of different departments through single window system and establish a SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent) government. The objectives of e-Mitra are shown in the figure 1:

- **Integrated approach:** To provide hassle free one-stop services to the citizens through a chain of Integrated Citizen Service Centres. Integrated here means bringing together the services of several government and private agencies and offering them to the public at the same counter.
- **Accessibility:** Enhance accessibility of information to the citizens. Any counter at all the service centres should provide all the services offered by e-Mitra. A citizen can walk into any service centre and experience the same quality of service.
- **Proximity:** Citizens should not have to travel more than 2 kilometers to reach the e-Mitra centre from their home or office to obtain any of the service.
- **Operational efficiency:** The service time should not be more than 3 minutes per transaction and the total time spent by a citizen for receiving services should not be more than 15 minutes including waiting time after reaching the service centre.
- **Availability of services:** All the services should be available at the centres for 12 hours a day and selected services for 24 hours over the internet. The services that do not involve any verification or attestation of documents should also be offered over the internet, so that citizens can use them from their home or office.
- **Comfortable experience:** Citizens should not stand in long queues. Proper seating arrangements and shelter should be made available to them. The need for citizens to visit government offices should be minimized.
- **Cost effective:** The overall cost of transacting with government should be reduced. This cost may include charges paid or cost on travel being incurred by the consumer to receive the services.
- **Employment:** Increase the employment opportunity of the youth by giving them preference in allotting e-Mitra kiosks.
- **Architecture:** The architecture adopted should be scalable and secure so that it can cover entire geographical area. The equipments used should last for longer duration without being replaced.
- **Sustainability:** The business model should be such that the operations are sustainable for longer period and financially viable for kiosk owners and continue to provide benefits to the government and the citizen.

The track record of e-Mitra shows that most of the above objectives have been realized during the past few years of operations.

Need for ICT based citizen service delivery system: e-Mitra

The services to the citizens were delivered manually before the implementation of ICT based citizen service delivery i.e. e-Mitra. In the manual system a citizen had to visit a number of departments to utilize a variety of services needed from the government or private agencies. There are many other difficulties faced by the users in the manual system, which not only causes inconvenience but also increases cost and time for using the services.

Benefits of ICT based service delivery system

The ICT based service delivery system to the citizens breaks down obsolete structures, interdepartmental barriers and rewards its customers with better services at lower costs doing more, and better, for less. Ultimately, the government hopes to completely eliminate face-to-face interaction with its citizen, to the extent possible by increasing the value of customer self-service and two-way flow of information so that people will come to enjoy to interact with the Government. Even though there are numerous direct and indirect benefits of ICT enabled service delivery system, only some of the direct benefits are highlighted here.

- The citizens are not required to go to various departments to receive services rather they can now go to the counter at any centre for any service offered by any agency.
- The service centres are available within the proximity of his office or home i.e. within 2 kilometres, thus distance and time required to travel is reduced for receiving any of service.
- The consumer can now immediately access any service without waiting for long hours.
- Computerized receipts are provided which is error free and accurate with a longer life.
- Working hours of the centres are convenient as the services are provided beyond the office hours and also on holidays.
- Online verification of payments is available for immediate feedback.

Services provided through e-Mitra

The e-Mitra was launched with a limited set of citizen services. However, with the acceptance of the model, the list of services offered at e-Mitra is growing steadily. Initially it was difficult to convince government agencies to join the project but the idea of one-stop-shop has triggered and now many government and private agencies are approaching the implementing agency to include their services under the umbrella of e-Mitra. The following are the most common services offered to the citizens at the e-Mitra centres across the State.

- Payment of utility bills – water bills, electricity bills of electricity board
- Payment of telephone service provider bills - landline, broad band, mobile of various service providers
- Payment of recharge of Direct To Home services DISH TV, Tata Sky etc.
- Payment of examination fee of various agencies viz. Rajasthan Public Service Commission, universities, Common Management Aptitude Test, Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education and other examinations.
- Payment of insurance policies of various companies such as Life Insurance Corporation, ICICI Prudential etc.
- Application for PAN Card, Ration Card
- Application for passport
- Digital domicile certificate, death and birth registration, caste certificate, minority, solvency, Marriage Certificate etc.
- Registration, renewal for employment in employment department
- Forest department booking service
- Access to land & revenue records (ROR), revenue jama bandi fee
- Sale of stamp paper, revenue ticket, deed writing
- Submission of grievances
- Agriculture application for grant of diggi, ponds, pipelines, dealer licenses for seeds, input license for selling fertilizers, retailer and other services
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Services
- Horticulture creation, drip irrigation, sprinkler and other services of water resources
- Application form of various social welfare schemes such as Anuprati Scheme, Disability Certificate, Panna Dhai Jeevan Amrit Yojana and other services
- Lottery fee for schemes of Jaipur Development Authorities
- Payment of various dues - Lease money of house, installation of EMI, urban development tax, Rajasthan Housing Board payment Jaipur Development Authority and Municipal Corporations
- Police character verification certificate, domestic servant, tenant verification
- Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation ticket booking, railway tickets
- Right to Information application payment, document printing

Various other services of different departments are also being included on e-Mitra based on specific requirements of departments.

Institutional framework of e-Governance

There are a number of factors, which affect the implementation of any e-Governance project, such as back office, direct contact points for the consumers,

stakeholders and their role, IT architecture, application software etc. All these are required to function in a coordinated manner to get the maximum benefits. The following are the major components of IT enabled citizen services offered by the Government of Rajasthan.

State Data Centre

The State Data Centre (SDC) has been set up by the Government of Rajasthan at the Yojana Bhawan, Jaipur. It houses all critical ICT infrastructure and applications under a unified and secured environment to facilitate vertical and horizontal integration of departmental data and services. SDC is operational 24x7 except during the scheduled maintenance period and exigencies beyond control. All the major government departments located at different places have been connected to the SDC. The web based e-Mitra portal (www.emitra.gov.in) is hosted by SDC. All Government to Citizen (G2C) services at kiosks are delivered through this portal.

All critical communication and computing equipments such as switches, routers, firewalls, Intrusion Detection System (IDS), Storage Area Network (SAN), database and web servers procured under different flagship projects have been installed at SDC. SDC is functional as a Network Operations Centre (NOC) for the Secretariat Local Area Network (SecLAN) and upcoming Rajasthan State Wide Area Network (R-SWAN) Project. Servers installed at SDC are capable of hosting all important applications like e-Mitra, e-P-rocurement, Document Management System, State GIS, Work Flow etc.

Service Centres

The contact point for any citizen to receive services of various organizations is through e-Mitra kiosk/ centres. Right from submission of application, financial transaction to final delivery; every activity takes place at these centres. Only for the cases where there is any statutory requirement of personal verification, the citizen is required to go to the concerned government functionary. These centres are managed and operated by private partners/ entrepreneurs. The web interface has also been provided so that the users are able to utilize services through the Internet.

e-Mitra Framework

The e-Mitra is one of the prestigious projects of the State for introducing e-Governance on a massive scale. Its implementation is decentralized, enabling entrepreneurship to flourish locally on a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model creating a conducive environment for the private sector. It plays an active role in implementation of the e-Mitra scheme, thereby becoming a partner of the government in the development of the country (<http://doitc.rajasthan.gov.in>).

The e-Mitra project is an integral part of e-Governance framework of the state. The left hand side of figure 2, depicts integrated ICT infrastructure created and

owned by the State government. This includes the state level and district level data centres interconnected with secretariat network and enterprise networks of various departments (District Collectorates, Agriculture Department, Registration & Stamps Department, Transport Department, etc.) over a state-wide WAN. This is an integrated IT enabled Back Office of the State Government.

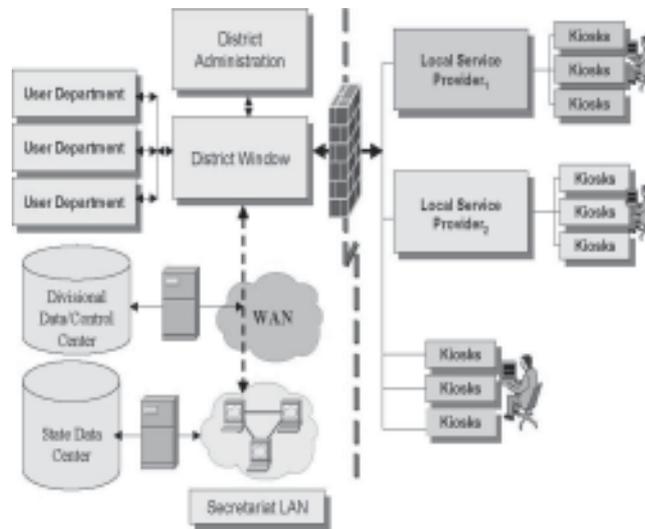


Fig. 2. e-Governance Framework of the State of Rajasthan

The right hand side of the figure denotes the e-enabled service delivery channels of the e-Mitra model. The citizens interact with the State Government through these access points or e-Mitra centres. These e-Mitra Front Offices are owned and operated by private partners on a sustainable revenue model.

Stakeholders in e-Mitra and their Role

State Designated Agency

The State Designated Agency (SDA) facilitates the implementation of CSC/ e-Mitra scheme within the state. It is primarily responsible for providing policy, content, financial and other support to the SCAs in the state. RajCOMP Info Services Limited is the SDA for the state of Rajasthan.

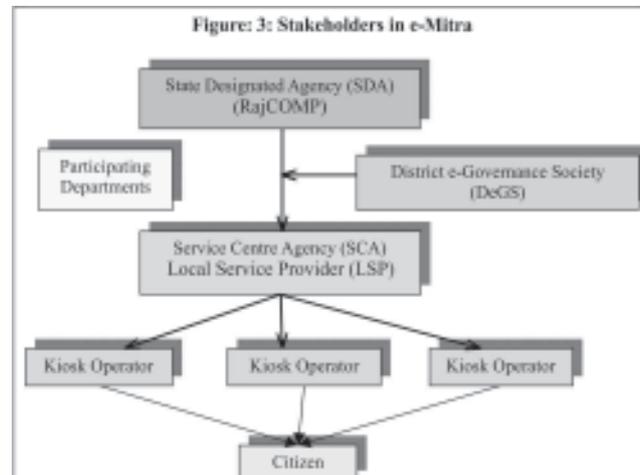


Fig.3. Stakeholders in e-Mitra

District e--Governance Society (DeGS)

The District e-Mitra Society acts as an extended arm of State Designated Agency (SDA) at district level to execute and monitor the e-Mitra scheme under the chairmanship of the respective District Collector. The DeGS coordinates and performs all day-to-day activities including financial management required to deliver services through e-Mitra Centres. It also interacts with the user departments to ensure efficient and timely delivery of services.

Service Centre Agency/ Local Service Provider (LSP)

The LSPs are private partners who set up and manage e-Mitra centres through which services of different departments are provided to the citizens. The LSP (for e-Mitra) and SCA (for CSC) are appointed by SDA through open tender for all the districts of the state. The LSP undertakes activities including effective delivery of government services as identified by the Government of Rajasthan from time to time, harnessing the state network, identifying and training the kiosk owners, establishing e-Mitra centres (either directly or through the kiosk owner), supplying, aggregating and updating contents, services etc. The LSP is responsible for overall management and sustainability of the e-Mitra scheme. Several other services of public interest, which are outside government domain, have also been added to the delivery channel developed by LSPs.

Kiosk Operator

The kiosk owner is the key to the success of the e-Mitra operations. The CSC (for villages) or e-Mitra is being operated by Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) or e-

Mitra operator (analogous to a franchise) at the grass root level who is directly responsible for providing services to the citizen. The preference is given to female entrepreneur in Rajasthan for selection of VLE or e-Mitra operator; in case such person is not available the male entrepreneur is considered. The idea of establishing CSC / e-Mitra is not to provide citizen-centric services through these centres but also overall development of the society (Figure 4). The kiosk owner reports to the LSP.

Citizen

The main beneficiary in any e-Governance project is citizen. Citizens avail services through the e-Mitra centres and make payments including transaction charges to e-Mitra centres wherever applicable

Participating Organizations

The Departments, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and private agencies allow Local Service Provider to deliver their services to the citizens through e-Mitra centres. Presently, there are more than 30 participating organizations including private agencies that are providing their services through e-Mitra.



Fig. 4. Aim of the Establishment of e-Mitra

The e-Mitra Project is implemented through the District e-Mitra Societies (DeGS) under the technical guidance of Department of Information Technology & Communication (DoIT & C) on behalf of Government of Rajasthan.

Application Software and Technology

At the time of launching e-Mitra project in the year 2005, IT enabled services were being provided through a client server based application software which was

developed by DOIT & C. The software was developed in VB-6.0 and the database was Oracle-10G/ Micro Soft Access. With the increase in the usage of e-Mitra and services offered through it, a web-based on-line e-Mitra portal has been developed and all the 33 districts have been hooked on to this portal. All the village level entrepreneurs (VLEs) under CSC scheme also use this on-line portal for Government to Citizen (G2C) or Business to Citizen (B2C) transactions. JAVA framework with Oracle 10G is used as technology. The application also supports payment gateway so that citizen can also pay their dues through credit/debit card or Net banking through the Internet.

Connectivity

The connectivity of the SDC with various departments is supervised by DOIT & C. The LSP is liable to make arrangements for connectivity between SDC and e-Mitra kiosks to deliver G2C and G2B services to the citizens through e-Mitra kiosks. The LSP may have to explore various options to provide connectivity. Horizontal connectivity is provided for LSPs/Kiosks at various levels (State HQ, District HQ and Tehsil HQ). The internet connectivity modes for kiosks can be:

- Broadband (Minimum 256 Kbps or more)
- Lease lines (Minimum 256 Kbps or more)
- Wireless or other media with a minimum 256 Kbps Internet speed.

IT Architecture at the LSP Level

The LSPs are mandated to act as a Service Access Provider (SAP) and network manager for the e-Mitra and is expected to utilize the existing application software developed by the DoIT & C i.e. www.emitra.gov.in. The e-Mitra is the delivery point where services of the government and non-government businesses are delivered to the end user. The e-Mitra kiosks are connected to SDC through any of the connectivity options – broadband, data card etc.

The LSP extends technical support to the e-Mitra kiosk and undertakes critical services such as remote diagnostics of the e-Mitra IT infrastructure, training and guidance to manage the e-Mitra centres. LSP is the first point of resolution for all technical issues at the e-Mitra.

IT Architecture at the e-Mitra Level

The IT architecture at the e-Mitra is a simple architecture having integration at the level of LSP, which acts as gateway for the e-Mitra. e-Mitra operates under a well regulated and controlled environment. It requires computing capabilities in the form of PCs, printers, operating system and other related hardware. It is envisaged that e-Mitra requires a single terminal machine and as the demand increases the e-Mitra would migrate to multi-terminal environment to deliver a variety of services such as distance learning, IT training etc. It is expected that the hardware will either be upgraded or replaced to handle the growth in volumes

over the period of next four to five years. The IT infrastructure needs to be available continuously; hence the provision of power backup is essential with every e-Mitra kiosk. There are two major components of the e-Mitra:

- **Digital infrastructure** comprises of all onsite technology equipment, such as PCs, printers - laser or inkjet, projectors, digital camera, internet connectivity (Broadband/ Lease Line or Data Card), and power backups such as UPS, generator set etc.
- **IT software** comprises of operating System, application for providing services, information systems security and management & maintenance tools etc.

The e-Mitra Portal

A web enabled portal (Figure 5) has been established which provides a single gateway to various stakeholders including the citizen. The site www.emitra.gov.in is the portal through which various G2C and B2C services are provided to the citizens. The portal provides end to end services such as initiation of application for the services, making payment and tracking of applications. The portal is capable of providing real time information, and generating detailed & summary reports useful for various stakeholders, e.g. number of transactions, type of transaction, value of transactions etc.. Apart from this portal, the SCA’s have their own portals for delivery of B2C services. The snapshot of e-Mitra portal is presented in the figure-5.



Fig. 5. Snapshot of e-Mitra Portal

The e-Mitra portal has been awarded as “Website of the week” for the second week of May, 2011

Payment mechanism for receiving services at e-Mitra

The services at the CSC/ e-Mitra can be accessed either through kiosks or online portal of e-Mitra. If the user is receiving services through kiosk the payment may be made directly by cash or cheque for which a proper receipt is provided to the consumer.

However, the following options are available to the user for payment of services received through online portal of e-Mitra :

- If the consumer has Axis bank account then services can be obtained through Axis Bank Net banking option without any extra charges but this option is available only for the Jaipur district.
- In case consumer has ICICI Net-Banking access, the services can be obtained for all the districts without any extra charges.
- The services of Bill Desk (Card/Net-Banking) can be used by the consumer in case consumer has net banking or credit card of some other bank. The following service tax is applicable on Bill Desk
- Credit cards: 1.07 % of transaction amount
- Debit cards: 0.75% of the transaction amount for value upto Rs 2000/- + applicable taxes and 1.0 % of the transaction amount for value above Rs 2000/- + applicable taxes (as per RBI Guidelines)
- Internet banking: Rs 5/- + service tax, for transactions upto Rs 500/- and Rs 10/- + Service tax, for transactions above Rs 500/-

Current status of usage of e-Mitra

As on May 1, 2014 the project has been implemented in all the 33 districts and more than 5776 kiosks are operational under CSC and e-Mitra across the State. In the year 2013 more than 27.8 million transactions have taken place with a revenue collection of more than Rs. 17.8 billion (www.mis.emitra.gov.in). The table below shows summary of transaction in past three years.

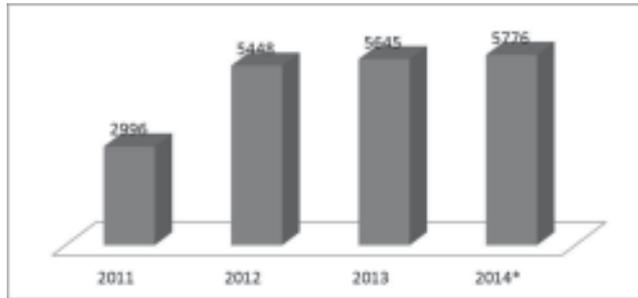
Table 1: Summary of Transaction for past three years

Year	OPERATIONAL KIOSK	NO OF TRANSACTIONS (in millions)	AMOUNT (in billion rupees)
2011	2996	18.31	16.47
2012	5448	20.42	17.60
2013	5645	27.87	17.86
2014*	5776	6.21	3.95

* Transaction up to April 2014

No of operational kiosks

Graph -1 shows increase in the number of operational kiosks in the state to provide various services through CSC/ e-Mitra centres. It shows that there were only 2996 operational kiosks in the state which have been increased to 5776 in the year 2014. It can be observed that number of kiosks have been increasing steadily in past three years.

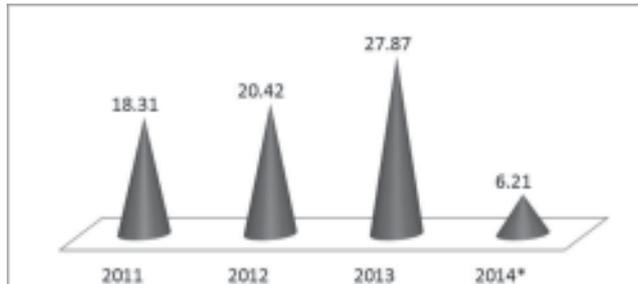


Graph 1. Comparison of Operational Kiosks

*Shows data up to April 2014

Number of transactions

The year wise comparisons of transaction which took place at all the centres of CSC/e-Mitra is depicted in the Graph-2. It shows that number of transactions in the year 2013 has increased almost by 150%, which shows that uses of services obtained by the citizen is increasing rapidly. In the first four months of 2014, the transactions have already crossed 6.21 millions.

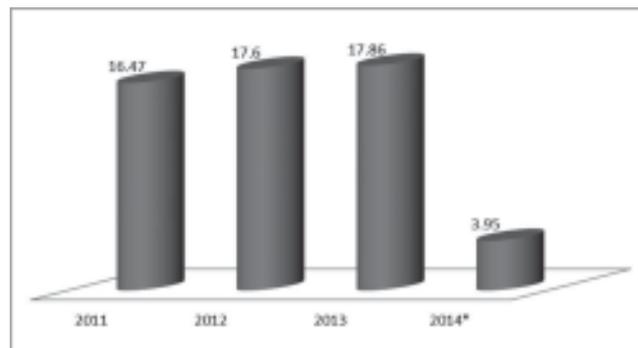


Graph 2. Year-wise comparison of number of transactions in the state (in millions)

*Shows data up to April 2014

Collection of Revenue

The popularity and usage of e-Mitra is also evident from the Graph-3, which shows that collection of revenue increased from 16.47 billion to 17.86 billion rupee in last three years. The revenue collection in the first four months of 2014 is more than 3.95 billion rupees, which shows that ICT enabled services are gaining popularity in the rural areas as well.



Graph 3. Comparison of Revenue Collected through CSC/e-Mitra (in Billion Rupee)

*Shows data up to April 2014

District-wise summary of transactions

Table 2 shows district wise summary of various parameters during the year 2013. It indicates that more than 1.6 million transactions took place through internet with a revenue collection of more than 508 million rupees. The transactions at e-Mitra/CSC is maximum in Jaipur district followed by Jodhpur, Bikaner, Ganganagar, and Udaipur districts.

Monitoring Mechanism

The large number of stakeholders and the vast geographical spread of the project have necessitated the setting up of a centralized real time reporting mechanism. Various reports of transactions and revenue collected through e-Mitra are available on (<http://www.cscmis.emitra.gov.in>). It has various modules such as Project Monitoring System, Monitoring of VLEs, MIS for CSC location, pendency report, grievance monitoring, monitoring SCA visits for sensitization activities, Online certification of CSCs, VLE Profiles, Kiosk connectivity status, notices/ circulars, letters, minutes of meetings, detail of funds etc.

Regular meetings are being conducted by Secretary, Information Technology & Communication with different participating departments, LSPs and other stakeholders, minutes of which are also placed on this portal. The officials of DOIT & C are also visiting CSCs and e-Mitra on regular basis for monitoring progress and solve difficulties faced in implementation.

The portal allows for real time communication and information sharing among various project stakeholders such as VLEs, SCAs, the District e-Governance Societies of the 33 districts in Rajasthan and the project monitoring team located at DoIT & C, Jaipur.

Table: 2 District wise Summary of data of CSC/e-Mitra for the date 01-01-2013 To 31-12-2013

Sr No	District Name	Operational Kiosk	No Of Transactions	Amount
--	INTERNET	1	1649224	508,359,438.72
1	Ajmer	216	1119920	310,362,288.41
2	Alwar	322	866100	311,568,676.00
3	Banswara	141	397939	225,025,052.08
4	Baran	129	147543	27,247,741.00
5	Barmer	331	610076	325,575,398.80
6	Bharatpur	337	692533	334,587,922.52
7	Bhilwara	233	519141	283,255,118.50
8	Bikaner	194	1391057	1,124,184,902.47
9	Bundi	126	288035	79,810,901.50
10	Chittorgarh	145	516902	447,659,903.00
11	Churu	175	787434	385,770,969.85
12	Dausa	151	413513	112,428,310.50
13	Dholpur	154	246918	91,138,304.50
14	Dungarpur	87	262366	113,044,140.00
15	Ganganagar	452	1275663	1,074,595,672.78
16	Hanumangarh	279	780487	583,755,213.76
17	Jaipur	606	6947253	5,501,136,526.32
18	Jaisalmer	87	91162	30,184,811.00
19	Jalore	125	421699	271,144,828.00
20	Jhalawar	166	320077	137,111,289.00
21	Jhunjhunu	177	1600615	632,433,046.95
22	Jodhpur	289	1823465	1,711,202,631.95
23	Karauli	124	285805	59,915,145.50
24	Kota	170	571230	319,923,357.31
25	Nagaur	192	790769	174,504,842.93
26	Pali	173	1255673	823,422,782.60
27	Pratapgarh	88	172366	67,686,540.00
28	Rajsamand	127	370477	269,931,160.00
29	Sawai Madhopur	108	316016	106,245,296.70
30	Sikar	227	992595	338,598,214.25
31	Sirohi	83	116871	46,706,400.50
32	Tonk	161	420570	110,308,648.00
33	Udaipur	269	1059482	922,489,044.23

Training and Publicity

The Government is serious about creating awareness amongst public regarding CSC and e-Mitra for which regular publicity campaigns are organized in the rural and the urban areas. The training is also imparted on regular basis to Village Level Entrepreneurs / e-Mitra kiosk operators, local service providers, nodal officers of various departments and government officials in the district and officers of DOIT & C.

Future Plans

Increasing basket of services

Long term financial viability of the e-Mitra/ CSCs can be ensured only by providing a large number of services, which can be offered to citizens through it. Some of the recently added services relate to caste, income, solvency certificates etc., in addition to increasing Business to Citizen (B2C) services. The e-Mitra team is preparing itself to expand the portfolio of Government to Citizen (G2C) and Business to Citizen (B2C) services.

Integration with banks for online transfer of funds

The provision of citizen services through e-Mitra/ CSCs currently involves transfer of funds to multiple stakeholders. In order to streamline the process and reduce the cycle time of funds flowing from one stakeholder to another, the team is trying to put in place online transfer of funds. This will enable funds to be transferred conveniently and instantly 24X7, without having to wait in the queues during restricted banking hours.

To make this a success, the team is intensively interacting with various departments as well as citizens to ensure acceptability of digitally signed certificates and also developing skills amongst government officials for using digitally signed documents.

Common challenges faced by the consumers for using e-Mitra

- The online e-Mitra portal is not available in the Hindi language; therefore the users who are not comfortable with English in urban or rural region find it cumbersome to use the portal.
- The payment made on the online portal has limited features where consumer has to pay extra charges in case he does not have Axis Bank/ ICICI net banking account. The services of the Bill desk has been introduced but additional charges have to be paid by the consumer even if he makes payment through net banking, debit card or credit card. Thus the users are reluctant in using Online Portal of e-Mitra, while these services should be without any extra charges.

Any project which is implemented usually would have some difficulties at the initial stages, especially when it is related to IT which caters to large

number of consumers. Following are some of the problems which users face while availing of services through various e-Governance initiative implemented by Government of Rajasthan:

- The services (specially payment of utility bills) at the CSC/ e-Mitra centres are not entertained after due date, in such cases consumers have to go to the department counters to make the payment and there again they have to stand in long queues.
- Time during which the centre is supposed to be opened, it is closed, or the staff is not available which creates unnecessary botheration for consumers. Similarly, CSCs are expected to be operational on Sundays and holidays but the owners open on these days as per their convenience.
- There are service centre kiosks which are physically so small that consumers have to stand on road or under the sun. Proper arrangements should be made for the consumers with appropriate shelter. Also, all the services are not being offered at every service centre, as are advertised, some of the centres offer services which are convenient and financially more beneficial to them.
- Sometimes due to power failure or server problem, the services are not provided and consumers have to make additional trip. In such cases service centres may collect payment and provide a manual receipt.
- The contract of service centres are sometimes not renewed in time because of which centres are closed without any notice and therefore, consumers have to make additional trips and have to travel long distance to avail services.
- It has been noted in few cases, specially for utility bill payment that after making payment at CSC/ e-Mitra, proper entries are not transferred to the concerned service provider such as Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, Electricity Department office, because of which due payment is shown in the next month's bill. So, sometimes the consumers have to make double payment or need to go to actual service provider for adjustment.

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