

e-Gram : An ICT Initiative to Transform Rural Governance

Information plays a very crucial role in overall development of the society, and easily accessible information results in a healthy and dynamic democracy. The growing innovations in the use of Information and Communication Technologies have opened up new era of information dissemination. This becomes all the more challenging, but possible, if it is targeted towards catering to the information needs of rural communities.



Indu Gupta
State Informatics Officer, Rajasthan
indugupta@nic.in



Chandan Sen
District Informatics Officer, Bundi
chandan.sen@nic.in

With an objective focused on satisfying the information needs of the poorest among poor and those who face difficulties in access to information necessary for improving and securing their life, Rajasthan embarked upon the Project “e-Gram”, which primarily was meant to serve as a tool to do a reality check on the status of amenities being provided by government departments, especially in the rural areas. Through a web based application (<http://egram.raj.nic.in>),

the village-wise amenities and their monthly status is directly being captured right at the grass root level. A 'Gram Prabhari' is entrusted with the responsibility of filling in the form, in consultation with villagers. More than 12 sectors like Health, Education, PHED, Woman & Child Welfare, Power, Social Justice, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, PDS, Cooperative and Rural Development were covered in a single format, thus saving a lot in terms of time and cost.

Excerpt of the letter from Sh. C K Mathew, Principal Secretary Finance, Govt. of Rajasthan



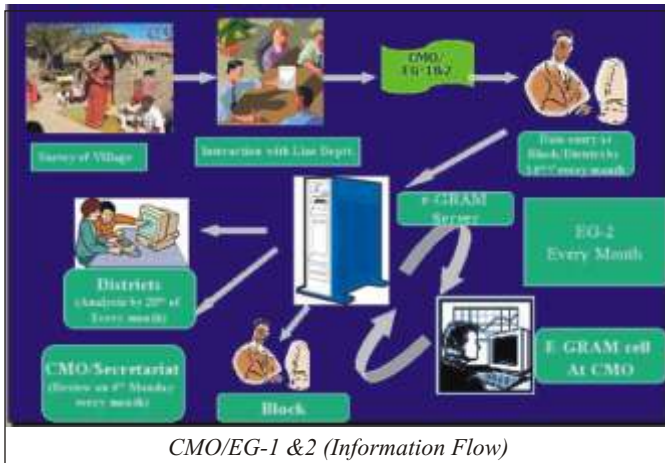
The e-Gram setup has been initiated with an objective of obtaining a reality check. Administration and citizens both are benefited in terms of user friendly feedback channel and better service delivery respectively. NIC's Rajasthan's efforts are really commendable.

The target sectors and the attributes for these sectors have been segregated into two parts. A relatively permanent CMO EG-1 and other requiring information capture on monthly basis CMO EG-2. The two formats for each information cluster were designed after detailed deliberations with field functionaries, planners and administrators.

Highlights : The web enabled software has an easy entry / report module with a Local language interface. There is a single data repository of around 400 attributes of each of the 43337 villages. A high bandwidth (2Mbps) connectivity is operational in all districts. To make the whole initiative more responsive to the village level requirements,

feedback on the services is collected directly from the villages every month.

Data entry is done upto block level from any kiosk having internet connectivity. Field level functionaries of the line departments and all other stakeholders have an access to the report module. Success of this initiative lies in the monthly review where the block level functionaries provide the information instantaneously. District level monitoring is also done at the subdivisions and at the revenue officials meeting regularly. It has also served as a source of employment generation for unemployed, trained youth who are engaged as data entry operators at different nodes across the state.



Information Collection: There are 33 district headquarters with 249 blocks and information collection is facilitated by NIC's ICT setup. Only data entry process has been outsourced, which has benefited the rural mass manifold. Information collection is completed by 6th of every month and then data entry is completed by 14th. Reviews are being organized using NIC's Video Conferencing facilities available in Districts. These reviews are chaired by Apex level of administrative hierarchy. The village directory created on the basis of Census 2001 location codes has become a standard for all other location specific implementations in the state. The ICT tool with its impact from the Dhani to the Rajdhani has thus proved to be a boon for the entire strategic planner, the tactical manager and for the operational manager in many ways.

The objective was to have a simple and regular feed back mechanism to ensure effective service delivery to the final beneficiary residing at remotest place of the state. e-Gram

as a single window interface, to monitor the status of service delivery, ensures remedial actions promptly by all concerned departments. Since, the most under-served the rural poor, live in the most expensive to-serve areas, this initiative has left a sizable impact as it has helped in easy flow of information for the decision makers thus benefiting the rural masses.

The project was recently awarded under the e-governance category at Manthan Award South Asia 09 (MASA) at New Delhi and also at the e-Rajasthan Summit held at Jaipur.

The Development Team of e-Gram consist of the following NIC officials: Sh. P.K. Mittal, TD; Sh. Manoj Nagar & Sh. Arun Mathur, PSA's

Quotes of Appreciation for e-Gram

e-Gram application of Govt. of Rajasthan is an excellent tool for monitoring not only the progress of schemes at grass root level but also for conducting reality checks at the village level where it matters the most. Its usefulness and utility can be enhanced manifold by integrating it with the GIS application as was envisaged in the original scheme.

Sh. Tanmay Kumar, Secretary IT Govt. of Rajasthan.

e-Gram is very useful for both long term and short term planning; especially in addressing problems being faced in remote locations in the state. I found the data bank very handy for planning and implementing rural drinking water schemes.

Sh. Yaduvendra Mathur, IAS (Former Secretary Planning)

I was very impressed with the e-Gram project, everyone involved in the project need to be congratulated.

Smt. Kushal Singh (Former Chief Secretary)

For further information:

Smt. Indu Gupta
SIO NIC Rajasthan
318 NW Block, Secretariat, Jaipur.
Ph. : 0141 -2227992
sioraj@nic.in

Edited by: Vivek Verma

