

Community Information Centres (CICs) Project

The Community Information Centre's (CICs) project of the Government of India, launched on 17 August, 2002, is one of the world's largest Telecentre initiatives of the time. It has been implemented with an aim to take the multifarious benefits of ICT to the grassroots in the relatively remoter and less developed regions of India. CICs have been established in 555 Blocks of the eight North Eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. 56 CICs were established in Arunachal Pradesh.

The project goals were to set up ICT Infrastructure at the Block level, to provide Web Access and Internet Services such as E-mail, Market Access, Access to Socio-Economic Databases. Other services offered are E-learning (Computer Aided Learning Processes), E-medicine and E-consulting, E-governance applications, Government to citizen (Citizen Centric) services, Weather Information etc. It was envisaged that the CICs would create IT awareness among local people, conduct Computer Training Programmes and disseminate Notification on Tender and E-employment Notification. Each Centre is equipped with computer communications equipment: a Server and five Clients connected to a VSAT on Local Area Network (LAN). A TV has also been provided for edutainment purposes. Each CIC had two Operators for managing it and providing services to the public.

The CICs provide some Basic services which include Internet browsing, E-mail, Printing, Data entry, Word processing and Training for the local populace on fundamentals of computers.

The CICs have helped to accelerate IT usage in the rural areas of the North Eastern states of India and J&K.

Some of the more popular usages have been career guidance and distant learning opportunities, online admissions at various educational institutes, results of various examinations, online railway reservation booking and status, email and chat, TV viewing for entertainment and information, access to exam results, citizen centric services and access to government departments. The establishment of CICs has helped bridge the digital divide between the North East and J&K and the rest of the country. Although, CICs charge nominally for services provided, the revenue thus generated is, in some cases, not enough to even meet day-to-day running costs like those for paper and other consumables, electricity bills etc. Depending on the location of the CICs, however, some of them are able to even purchase additional equipment like color printers, scanners etc. It is the remoteness/centrality of the CIC site and the consequent paying capacity of the

user that determines the amount of income generated. However, in view of the enduring salutary social impact of the project it is felt that financial sustainability is not of key relevance.

The 56 CICs of Arunachal Pradesh is now being looked after by the Department of Information Technolgy, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh.

Project period : 2002-2007

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