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A study on effectiveness of ICT for implementation of SVEP through its local self-governing bodies in Tappal block, Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract
Nowadays, Governments around the world are under the pressure from citizens and beneficiaries of the respective schemes, to be more open and transparent in managing public funds and deliver quality implementation of public policies. These pressures create a demand for continuous improvements and reformation in governments policy execution systems. As a part of that, the governments have started utilizing Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) platforms for the implementation of public policy programmes and schemes. The central idea to use this ICT is to broaden the operational scope of modern public administration and the reliability of its actions as foundations to achieve progress, development, and good governance. So, to explore this, the Govt. of India has also started to use ICT as a tool for the implementation of its various schemes and projects. This implementation is not limited to the programmes of urban areas, but the ICT approach has been also introduced in the implementation of the public policy programmes designed for rural areas. The Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India has introduced this approach for its various schemes including Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Program (SVEP), to effectively implement the scheme for their beneficiaries and through the medium of scheme's Local Self-Governing Bodies (LSGBs). The impact of this approach of governance needs to be measured to understand whether this initiative is worthy or not for future applications in administration and governance.
In view of the above, this research delves into the extent of ICT adoption, its perceived benefits, and the challenges faced by its Local Self-Governing Bodies (LSGBs) in the Tappal Block. It also offers insights into optimizing ICT utilization for rural development programs. By understanding the effectiveness of ICT in SVEP, this study contributes to shaping future strategies and policies to be developed for rural development.

Keywords: Local self-governance, Public policy, Government Program, ICT, Rural Development

Introduction
The Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) is India's one of the flagship initiatives to promote rural entrepreneurship. SVEP aims to provide sustainable self-employment opportunities in villages by encouraging the establishment of small enterprises. It will play a key role in fulfilling the sustainable development goal 1 i.e. No Poverty. SVEP focuses on development and communities by enhancing their entrepreneurial capabilities, providing skill development, and offering financial assistance to establish and sustain small businesses. In India's rural governance structure and implement such schemes, PRIs are vital to ensure that the government schemes reach to their intended beneficiaries. The success of this scheme depends largely on its implementation at the grassroots level, where local self-governing bodies of projects i.e Block Resource Committee (BRC), Cluster Level Federations (CLFs), Village Organizations (Vos) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) play a critical role.
To enhance the implementation of this scheme, after two years of its duration in Tappal Block, Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) tool is developed and rolled out at the field, to implement the scheme through SVEP Portal and SVEP App. The integration of ICT into SVEP's implementation is an innovative approach, and its key objective is to streamline processes, improve communication among stakeholders, and enhance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. However, the success of such ICT integration largely depends on the capacity and engagement of LSGB members in utilizing these tools effectively.

Review of Literature
The adoption of ICT in rural development has garnered increasing attention due to its potential to facilitate more efficient governance and improve service delivery to marginalized populations. This literature review will focus on the effectiveness of ICT in the implementation of Government Programs. It will explore the evolution of ICT in rural governance, the role of local self-governing bodies in ICT-based initiatives, challenges associated with ICT adoption in rural settings, and the impact on SVEP's implementation and outcomes.
Budhiraja, 2001 stated that, From the governmental perspective, ICTs are a catalytic tool in the provision of services to marginalized populations and citizens, with enhancement of transparency and accountability.
Khan 2003 noted that the traditional public administration and public policy implementation processes have their own weaknesses and limitations (inefficiency, inflexibility, ineffectiveness, red tape, corruption and dissatisfaction of citizens and lack of good governance etc.). It has forced the administration to undertake new and technology based approaches for public policy implementation to provide time bound, quick and pro-people services.
As per Chircu and Hae-Dong Lee, 2003; Lenk and Traunmueller, 2000b, Public sector organizations have now begun to understand the enormous benefits of leveraging internet technologies to improve electronic government

applications in both internal processes and communications with external constituencies. It offers a wide spectrum of citizen friendly services that would save time which was spent for coordination between various departments/stakeholders to do their task or implement the programs. In line with it, Governments across the world have started to incorporate the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into governmental processes, leading to the birth and popularization of the concept of e-governance, which is also known as SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent) innovative approach.

The 2003 World Public Sector Report noted that ICT emerged after the introduction of New Public Management (NPM), in the mid-1990s, which aimed at rendering governments' services and information to the public using electronic channels. ICT allows a government's internal and external communication to gain speed, precision, simplicity, outreach, and networking capacity. This can be converted into cost reductions and increased effectiveness, which are the two desired features of all government operations, and especially for public services. It can also be converted into 24/7 usefulness, transparency, accountability, networked structures of public administration and information management. Use of this ICT in governance is a paradigm shift over traditional Public Administration, which has two major benefits. Firstly, through the potential of ICT, huge amounts of data and knowledge transfer with speed, which leads to enhanced effectiveness and potency. Secondly, positive links between stakeholders through ICT improve quality of service delivery, which also helps in policy implementation and decision making.

As per Chen *et al.*2006, ICT is a technology-mediated approach that facilitates a transformation in the implementation of public policies as well as in the relationship between a government, stakeholders and beneficiaries/citizens. The success of ICT led e-Governance depends upon how a government functions, how it deals with information and the way stakeholders see their roles and act for the implementation of public policies. So, achieving success for e-Governance requires active participation of stakeholders.

The government has understood the strength and power of ICTs and shows more interest to provide citizen friendly services (Chircu & Hae-Dong Lee, 2003; Lenk & Traunmueller, 2000b). It also shows the upward trend of citizens' trust, confidence, security, ability, and capacity to interact with e-Government mechanisms.

UN, 2004 and 2008; Perucca and Sonntagbauer, 2014, noted that, nowadays this technology driven service delivery is leading an intelligent social transformation, which is more sustainable as well as resilient for governments and ensures good governance.

According to Bhatnagar (2014) [2], ICT initiatives in rural governance in India began with computerization efforts and gradually evolved into more comprehensive e-governance programs aimed at decentralizing power and increasing accountability at the local level. These initiatives include digital land records, telemedicine services, and online grievance redressal mechanisms.

According to Sharma and Sharma (2017), PRIs play a critical role in facilitating the adoption of ICT by acting as intermediaries between the community and the state. If the capacity of Local Self-Governing Bodies is built, any program can be implemented and monitored through the usage of ICT tools.

Ghosh (2018) found from his study that the application of ICT in the rural governance system led the significant changes from basic record keeping to digitalization of records and real time monitoring system. This initiative has largely impacted to the efficiency of local self-governing bodies to manage their administrative responsibilities as well as daily operations.

Nair (2019) [12] highlighted the role of local self-governing bodies in the landscape of rural development and the importance of ICT in the implementation of Government programs. Along with this, he has noted that ICT's significance is depends on the readiness of local self-governing institutions and well-equipped digital infrastructure as well as the internet connectivity at the rural level.

Mahajan (2020) [9] noted in his study that the web portal and application-based approach to execute the Government Programs has made the initiative approachable for the beneficiaries in some of the blocks. This can be also enable the efficient monitoring and tracking system to support the beneficiaries and streamline the process of implementation

According to Gupta *et al*. (2021) [4, 5], Along with the improvement in the program delivery, ICT tools have also built the capacity of beneficiaries to deal with the market, which led to increase their livelihood.

Research Gap

The gap is the less available research on the impact of ICT on various schemes of the Indian Government. Due to this, the Indian policy makers cannot get the evidence based clear insight to understand the scale of impact on various objectives, its feasibility and areas of improvement that need to be taken care while approaching the ICT, in the execution of the upcoming policies. To narrow this gap or problem, this study is undertaken. It will help policy makers to think about how to harness technology intervention in execution of public policies to achieve their objectives for development and newer reformations in the state.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to assess how effectively ICT has been integrated into the implementation of the SVEP in the Tappal Block, and how it supports the local self-governing bodies (PRIs) in executing their roles. The key objectives of research is as follows:

- To study the significance of ICT tools (i.e. SVEP Portal & App) for implementation of SVEP scheme by its LSGB Members.
- To study the challenges experienced by LSGB Members of SVEP, while using ICT for program implementation.

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative data collection approach with all the 41 Local Self-Governing Body Members of the scheme (BRC & CLF) in Tappal Block, who are using ICT for the implementation of SVEP scheme.

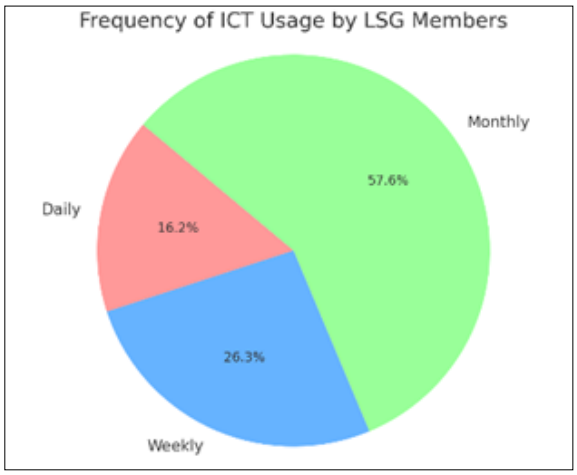
Through the above cited methodology, the attempt has been made to measure the effectiveness of ICT tools, which directly affect to the implementation of program. Including these, the challenges of Local Self-Governing Bodies of the program is also captured to identify the gaps in the execution.

Interpretation and Analysis

Based on the captured data, the findings are as mentioned below.

Usage Patterns of ICT Among LSG Members (BRC)

- ICT adoption among Block Resource Committee (BRCs) and Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) is well-established, with varying frequencies:
- 16% use ICT daily, demonstrating consistent integration into their workflows.
- 26% use ICT weekly, indicating moderate usage for specific tasks or reporting requirements.
- 57% use ICT monthly, suggesting periodic engagement, likely aligned with milestone-based activities. This pattern reflects a substantial penetration of ICT tools among the members, although there is room for more frequent and consistent utilization.



Impact of ICT on SVEP Implementation

The intervention of ICT tools in the implementation of the SVEP program has yielded the following benefits:

Enhanced Communication: 81% of members acknowledged that ICT tools significantly improved communication between stakeholders, reducing delays and facilitating better coordination.

Operational Benefits

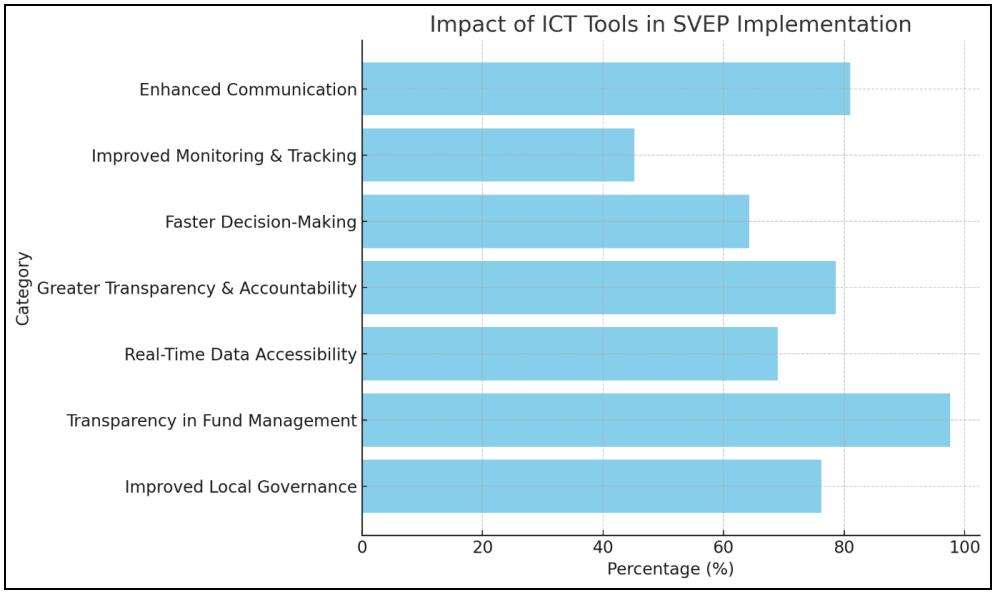
- **Monitoring & Tracking:** 45.2% noted improved capabilities for oversight.
- **Faster Decision-Making:** 64.3% appreciated expedited decision-making processes, crucial for addressing dynamic challenges.
- **Transparency & Accountability:** 78.6% observed greater transparency and accountability, fostering trust and good governance.

Real-Time Data Accessibility: 69% of members found ICT tools instrumental in providing real-time data, aiding responsiveness and precise decision-making.

Transparency in Transactions & Fund Management System: As per the survey, 97.6% members of local self-governing bodies have stated that the transparency is enhanced in fund allocation and disbursement due to SVEP Web Portal & Application.

Improvement in Governance: 76.2% members of local self-governing bodies found that the ICT approach in SVEP has increased the operational efficiency, transparency, accountability and improved the governance at the grassroots level.

The results reflect the significance of ICT tools in the implementation of SVEP.



Challenges in ICT Adoption

Despite the promising benefits, certain challenges hinder the full potential of ICT in SVEP implementation:

- **Training:** To get the well acquainted with the application of ICT in the operations of program implementation, 97% of local self-governing body members identified the need for regular training.
- **Connectivity of Internet:** The real time data synchronization is depended on the connectivity of internet. 95% of local self-governing body members reported that the internet and digital infrastructure needs to be well established for the effective use of ICT tools.

Conclusion

The integration of ICT in the implementation of SVEP has brought significant improvements in communication, transparency, accountability, financial management, and governance. ICT tools have made it possible to collect real-time data on program implementation, which allows timely interventions and course corrections. The introduction of digital dashboards and mobile application-based systems has also increased transparency in the monitoring and tracking process.

Despite the numerous benefits of ICT in implementing SVEP, several challenges affect its widespread adoption in rural and remote areas. Issues such as digital illiteracy to rural community and internet connectivity is imperative to maximize its potential. With strategic interventions and industry-academia collaborations, ICT can further empower LSGBs, enhance the program's efficiency, and contribute to the socio-economic development of rural communities.

Insights and Recommendations

- **Capacity Building:** Regular training and capacity building programs needs to be conducted at block level for local self-governing bodies of the scheme, so that the they can effectively use the ICT for the implementation of the scheme.
- **Infrastructure Enhancement:** Collaborate with telecom providers and government agencies to improve internet connectivity in rural areas, ensuring seamless data access and synchronization.
- **Technology Customization:** Develop user-friendly interfaces and localized content in ICT tools to address language and literacy barriers.
- **Periodic Feedback and Support:** Establish a feedback mechanism to address user concerns and continuously improve ICT tools.

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