“Evolving Citizen Centric Rural e-Governance Framework”

The ARC in its eleventh report on Promoting e-Governance has in its recommendation included that “Building a congenial environment is a sine-qua-non for successful implementation of e-Governance initiatives”, it further goes on to add that one of the key ingredients for achieving congenial environment for e-governance projects is “creating awareness in the public with a view to generate a demand for change (para 6.2.2).” In the same tone the ARC further indicated that (pg 66): Apart from building capabilities within the government, there is need for generating widespread awareness among public at large. The success of e-governance lies in increasing the number of electronic interaction between citizens and the government and not merely in building the infrastructure of e-Governance. In addition to governmental measures, a proactive approach from civil society groups would also generate greater demand and acceptance for e-Governance initiatives”. In this perspective DARPG intended to take up an initiative to build a framework for incorporating voice of the poor and marginalized in design of e-governance project.

2. Under the Social Accountability initiative of the CBPR programme a framework for inclusion of citizen’s voice in design of National Programmes and its monitoring is being attempted. Similarly this initiative of DARPG takes forward this effort, by building a similar framework for e-governance initiatives. The social accountability framework could be extended (with modification) for the rural citizen participation in e-governance projects. The department can thus make this report available to the Planning Commission and DIT for institutionalization of rural citizen’s participation in e-governance initiatives. This report can also be an input for the e-governance policy under preparation.

a. Objective of the Assignment
   i. To delineate issues and solutions for making ICT applications pertinent to the needs and expectations of the rural citizens
   ii. Based on the analysis (S.No.i) propose a citizen-centric rural e-governance framework

b. Research questions
   i. Has the existing ICT/e-Governance initiative been accepted by the poor and the marginalized communities of the villages?
   ii. Is there a methodology and procedure for taking inputs from the community/beneficiaries (especially the poor and the marginalized) during design of ICT?
iii. Does participation of the poor and marginalized beneficiaries in rural areas lead to a value proposition?

iv. Does support form institutions at the village level like PRIs, NGOs etc provides support for acceptance of ICT applications by the poor?

c. Approach and Methodology
The proposed study would use the Participatory research approach. The academic area in which the study would fall is technology diffusion on which a substantial literature is available internationally, however not much work is available in India for diffusion for ICT technology for rural masses. The study would be done in four phases

i. **Citizen Consultation Round** (CCR): Field survey of sixty villages in nine states. The respondents include rural youth, farmers, *adivasi*’s artisans, PRI functionaries, NGO representatives and a citizen consultation workshop attended by villagers from various states in the country for validation of the findings of the field survey. This phase has already been conducted. **Outcome of CCR:** Refine understanding of vital issues village communities face relating to governance and technology diffusion.

ii. **Experts Opinion Round** (EOR): The issues which have evolved in Phase I will be vetted by e-governance experts including those from LSE, McGill University, IIMs, IITs, DIT, IL&FS etc. **Outcome:** Shortlist of the issues and possible solutions on rural ICT diffusion

iii. **Officers Response Round** (ORR): The output of the EOR round would be presented to senior and middle level officers and Government of India for further deliberations so as to include the practitioners and policy makers point of view

iv. **Round Table on Rural e-Governance** (RReG): The first three phases will enable delineation of issues, possible solutions and a ranking of the issues involved from the point of view of poor people for rural e-governance implementation. These would be discussed in a one day workshop wherein a debate by experts and citizens on the emergent issues will be conducted and a consensus for a best fir solution attempted.
d. Key Deliverables

i. Identification of Key Governance Issues that need to be addressed using ICT in rural regions

ii. Key Action Areas where changes are required in existing models of rural e-governance design and implementation

iii. Suggested applications for design of more citizen centric rural e-Governance initiative

iv. Policy Recommendations for a more citizen centric rural e-Governance initiative

v. List of Critical Success Factors for benchmarking any e-Governance initiative for rural development

vi. An integrated e-Governance framework for designing citizen centric rural ICT/e-Government projects which accept indigenous inputs form community at the grassroots