



PMGDISHA IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

Dr. Charru Malhotra



Indian Institute of Public Administration
New Delhi

Executive Summary

The biggest change in the 21st century has and will be in regard to the upcoming advancements in digitisation and automation. From consuming information to creating, collaborating and socialising, the use of technology has become an integral part in our everyday lives. Familiarity with the working of these technologies has therefore, become a valuable learning tool for our society to move forward. Recognising the need and importance of digital literacy in today's world, various agencies and organisations around the world have taken steps towards the introduction of these skills in different parts of the world. India with its growing population, has, emerged as both a consumer and producer of different digital tools. This growth, however, has been limited to only a fraction of its population- much of which belongs to the urban areas of the country. The rural parts on the contrary see a very limited use and adoption of different digital technologies and advances. A major reason for this problem has been identified as the lack of knowledge as well as awareness about the understanding and benefits of various digital tools and applications. This has created a digital divide between the urban and rural spaces within the country. This gap or digital divide has become more apparent as the country moves towards the adoption of a faster and more secure ways of faceless, cashless, contactless and paperless governance through the medium of digital technologies. The government policies today, rely heavily on digital operations in different sectors like education, healthcare, economy and governance. Citizen participation using digital technologies in this context emerges as an essential requisite. It is thus important that they aim to create an engaging, collaborative and agile framework for all.

The Government of India recognising this need for digital literacy in our country and decided to launch PMGDISHA in February 2017. The scheme aimed at making 6 crore people in the rural areas across different states and UTs digitally literate over the course of three years. It envisioned to reach around 40% of the rural population by covering one member from every eligible household to transform India into a knowledge economy and society. PMGDISHA as a digital literacy programme has the potential to not only bridge the digital divide in the

country but also facilitate citizen participation into the process of governance at the grassroots level.

With the PMGDISHA scheme about to complete its initial time frame, Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi was entrusted the task to undertake the impact assessment analysis at this current phase of the scheme. To do so, IIPA proposed a conceptual framework to analyse the development, progress and impact of the scheme based on five essential parameters viz. Technical, Economy, Legal, Operational and Social, which were triangulated and validated with the management and beneficiary perspectives. The scheme was then further assessed in regards to its proposed vision and targets, its achievements and strategy towards the inclusion of different target groups, such as SC/ST, BPL, minorities, women, differently abled etc., the scheme infrastructure and quality of trainers and finally the impact of the training on the target beneficiaries. To accomplish this, IIPA not only referred to the available documents, official reports including Detailed Project Report (DPR), expenditure reports, state-wise targets, registrations and certification of the scheme but also conducted multiple structured/semi-structured interviews with PMGDISHA team and experts. This was followed by a detailed primary study with a Questionnaire Survey for the CSC VLEs and the beneficiaries of the scheme. This data from the online survey was then validated with the help of the Field Survey that the team carried out at 10 CSC centres in different parts of the country. This field survey cum workshop also allowed us get an insight into the actual working and ground realities of the scheme as well as understand the some of the problems faced by the largest stakeholders within the programme- the Beneficiaries and the VLEs.

After this comprehensive and methodological evaluation, IIPA concluded that PMGDISHA as a digital literacy programme plays an indispensable part in not only bridging the digital gap in the country but also transforming it into a knowledge economy and society. Observing the vital contribution of PMGDISHA, IIPA lauds its potential and recommends the continuation of PMGDISHA.

IIPA has also recommended that PMGDISHA in its next phase should work towards keeping its curriculum dynamic, incorporating certain basic elements as well as the development and advances in the field. The programme in its next phase should also embody the digital needs and aspirations of beneficiaries in different areas of the country. Furthermore, it should seek to advance more innovative ways for content delivery so that the scheme can have an even greater reach beyond the intended target beneficiaries. PMGDISHA, by effectively creating a digital ecosystem in can increase this section's active participation in the process of growth and development within the country.

The table below lays out the different observations and recommendation made during the assessment of PMGDISHA along the different parameters of the framework mentioned above:

Parameter	Observations
Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The official scheme website for the scheme while acting as an important repository for all information related to it is only available in English. This makes it inaccessible to the most important stakeholder of the programme- the beneficiary. This can act as a barrier to anyone seeking information on the program and has the potential to hamper the awareness on the benefits and advantages of the scheme to possible future beneficiaries. The existing course curriculum does an efficient job of introducing beneficiaries to necessary knowledge about the different devices and

	<p>application. Over 80% of the beneficiaries in the survey indicated that they were satisfied with the course curriculum. Its availability in 22 national languages and communication via multimedia content makes it accessible, facilitating better understanding. The scheme should also seek to make the programme curriculum more dynamic and in line with the new developments in the field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 75% indicated that they were satisfied with the technical support provided to them by the PMU. This is important as at the local level, it is the CSC VLEs who bridge the gap between citizen's need and the government's vision of digital literacy. Any form of support to them would therefore facilitate better reach and implementation of the scheme. • Over 75% of the VLEs found the PMGDISHA portal easy to use and navigate. This is important as ability to use and access the official PMGDISHA portal and other applications within easily. Also facilitates the mannerly execution of various operational processes (enrolment, registration, and certification) within the scheme.
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PMGDISHA has acted as a great source of livelihood not only for the citizens who are acquiring digital literacy but also for the people who work and run these CSC centres. As per the survey, almost 45.9% of the CSC owners earn 50% or more than 50% of their income through PMGDISHA. • Payments are an essential part for the implementation of the training. According to the survey the payments of training as received by the CSCs, approx. more than 72.3% of the CSCs are satisfied with the amount paid for the training whereas the rest approx. 27.7% still finds room for improvement. • The overlap of allocated funds under certain subcategories as per the guidelines provided by Government of India can lead non-utilization of funds made available for these categories. This can cause problems for the implementation agency as they cannot use these funds in areas where there is still need of funds. This problem of overlap can be resolved by data normalization across schemes. • Digital literacy training among the rural population has the potential ability to have a direct impact on the country's GDP. This training and the subsequent use and application of various digital devices and services by people in different sectors of the rural economy can transform this sector. This will not only increase its share to country's GDP and boost its growth but will also help create jobs and income within this sector.
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slight divergence from a major objective of the scheme that calls for more active participation of minority communities within the rural areas. • The despite the above has performed well in empowering the weaker section, less participation of very poor and very illiterate is an issue that was observed in our personal interactions with the beneficiaries.
Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance of the scheme is not good in terms of numbers achieved. The target achieved at the time of assessment was only 33% of the total if certified beneficiaries are counted and less than 50% when the total number of trained candidates is considered. • Lack of awareness and lack of motivation to learn more about digital literacy were two major reasons for not enrolling in PMGDISHA as highlighted in the survey. • According to the survey, almost 51.1% CSCs face poor network connectivity as the main issue in conducting the training. Apart from that 29.3% find lack of local administrative support, 23.9% find erratic power supply cuts as main hurdles for conducting the training. Other challenges include lack of

availability of trainers (19.6%), lack of law and order (14.2%) and tough hardware and maintenance (13.5%). These can prove to be major hurdles in the implementation of the scheme.

- A major area of concern that came up during the survey was the drop-out rate among the candidates. According to the survey, 42.8% of the CSCs recorded a drop-out of less than 10% of Beneficiaries, whereas, approximately 35.5% of the CSCs recorded a drop-out of people between 10% and 50% of the beneficiaries. On the other hand, approximately 11.3% CSCs recorded a drop out of more than 50% and the remaining CSCs had no data of drop-outs.
- The social media platforms can be used not only for information sharing but also to engage the audience and build virality in the process of content distribution. PMGDISHA's social media platforms can enhance their engagement and increase the consumption of their content by using the content already available on the website and YouTube.

Social

- According to the survey conducted it was reported by the CSCs that the majority of population, approx. 74.2% access government information related to various new schemes, 71.4% to learn e-banking or net banking, 64.7% for travel information and booking, 53.7% for agriculture and almost 48% for better healthcare facilities. PMGDISHA has thus worked to open this section of the population by equipping them with the access to knowledge various services like, e-commerce, healthcare, banking government services.
- PMGDISHA has also impacted the lives of individuals in terms of social acceptance and individual well-being. The survey indicated the same where beneficiaries found the scheme to be a medium of connecting with friends and family (52.5%), to find better job opportunities (52.1%), to improve education (59.2%) as well as social acceptance (43.1%).
- PMGDISHA has proven to be an effective medium of women empowerment in the rural areas. According to the survey over 46% of the beneficiaries were women. This can facilitate participation and inclusion of women in growth and development of the country.
- PMGDISHA has established itself as a program beneficial for most of the students, as almost 57.8% of the beneficiaries reported through the Survey belong to the student's category. Digital literacy is an important factor in any form of educational program. India with a majority of youth population should harness these young minds to contribute to the growth process in the country.

Table 1. 1: Observation Table

RECOMMENDATIONS

Technology

- The official scheme website should be available in languages other than English for ease of access to the most important stakeholder within the scheme- the beneficiary.
- The design and intuitiveness of the interface is not for the sensibilities of the rural user and digitally illiterate user. The fonts, graphics, buttons and navigation should keep the target user and devices in mind and render accordingly.

- The website should also display information on the benefits of digital literacy to the beneficiary on different aspects of their life. Motivation to do PMGDISHA should be one key theme that should be followed on the information site.

Data on Changing Digital and Economic Landscape

The dashboard and homepage show the data about the beneficiaries and state wise data also. This data is very basic and gives a very high level of information about the physical progress of the scheme.

Data on the impact of the scheme on the Social, Economic and Emotional quotient of the society at the rural level should be captured and displayed on the website. Capturing, Measuring and Displaying the graphs on these components will wield the success of the scheme effectively.

Inconsistent Funding

Inconsistent funding for the scheme works as a road blocker for the participation of biggest number of contributors in the 5 trillion economy goals of the country.

Participation of the Local/State Governments

Participation of local administration is vital for the identification of right candidate and motivation of the candidate to participate in the training. The same administration later helps in utilization of Govt. schemes after the training.

There should thus be efforts for increasing the participation of Local/State governments despite political differences so that the beneficiaries are able to enjoy fruits of digital literacy.

Measuring the Delta in the lifecycle of different beneficiary activities

An app is required that captures the key movements of the beneficiary either in using the knowledge for digital payments, information access, education, healthcare, schemes, insurance, travel etc.

Beneficiary behaviour and uses patterns tracking just for the analysis purpose without the personal data will ensure the success of the scheme and will provide the useful data to tweak the curriculum and future requirements of the beneficiary. This will help in delivering information, product and services according to needs of the trainees.

Learner to User Journey

CSCs should encourage these beneficiaries to use more and more services. This enhances and completes the journey of the learner to become an active user of the digital community.

Some reward programmes should be run to encourage these beneficiaries for using the digital services for different utilities and information exchange again and again.

Innovation in Content Delivery

A reward mechanism which awards people who have been able to successfully empower a certain number of people after completing their PMGDISHA training should be put in place.

It will provide an incentive to people to reach out to as many people as possible and also have a trickledown effect taking the knowledge of digital literacy to areas which would have not been possible before.

This can be made possible through an app with an interactive and user-friendly design, interface and content. A story-based content based on the principles of gamification can both be effective in its reach and in its engagement of beneficiaries into the reward system discussed above.

Social Media and PMGDISHA

Social media as a medium has the capacity to amplify the outreach of any campaign or policy and should be used for more effective execution of the scheme. Indian social media users have exponentially grown over the years and PMGDISHA requires an overhaul of how it approaches social media. We suggest that PMGDISHA can benefit from a change to how it approaches social media. Rather than limiting social media to just informative posts, the social media can serve as a bridge between the CSCs, trainers, and the trainees. It can also serve as a mode to increase awareness and engagement with the programme.

The content already available on the website and YouTube can be used on platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter to engage both primary and secondary beneficiaries. These are the people who may not be eligible for the scheme but can still enhance their existing knowledge. This will not only facilitate more integrated communication among different stakeholders of the scheme but would allow more innovation in content delivery to propagate digital literacy among more people.

Reusing the PMGDISHA ecosystem

A huge knowledge repository and ecosystem was created to ensure the effective implementation of the PMGDISHA scheme across India. As one of the biggest implementation in the World for digital literacy, the team has produced Systems, processes and the content; technology, operations and organisation; Policies, direction and the supervision, all these intellectual properties can be used again and again to empower similar initiatives in any part of the world or within India.

WAY FORWARD

The global outbreak of the novel coronavirus and the lockdown measures initiated to curb its spread has put the world in an unprecedented situation. The Indian Government, like many other nations all over had to suddenly figure out alternate ways of operations across different sectors of the society, as social distancing measures became necessary. Social distancing norms due to health concerns made remote work a necessity which in turn opened up the floodgates for rapid digital adoption around the world. Continuity in such a context was

made possible by the existence of some form digital infrastructure in the country which made it possible for central, state and district administrations as well as the private sector to continue rolling out essential services like education, healthcare, governance, banking, utilities, communications, information etc. This trend will carry over into the post pandemic world. The Pandemic has in many ways served as gentle reminder that there is a need to enable the citizens with skills necessary to navigate the largely unpredictable but digital post pandemic future. Digital literacy in the future can no longer be a luxury but a necessity as the new paradigm shift has transformed it into the need of the hour. PMGDISHA in this context would become even more significant as digital literacy gains even more importance as a crucial skill. Programmes like these have not only equipped the beneficiaries with basic knowledge to traverse into the vast world of digital technology but has also allowed them to use it for their own purpose to innovate, create, share and profit. Extension and expansion of the scheme is, therefore, a must as it will provide them with tools, markets and information critical for rural growth on the whole.