A STUDY OF COMMON SERVICE CENTRES IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MIZORAM

R. Lalremthanga [iD]* & **T. Sadashivam**

Department of Public Administration, Mizoram University, Aizawl, India

*✉ kanouterta@gmail.com

[iD] R. Lalremthanga: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8432-3450

ABSTRACT

The need for achieving good governance in any society in the present time is of utmost importance. And with the emergence of Information and Communication Technology and its use in governance in the form of E-Governance can go long way toward achieving the aforementioned goal. In the 21st century, E-Governance if implemented successfully, will not only deliver various public services to people more transparently and effectively but also empower the common people. One of the most important pillars of E-Governance in our country (India) is 'Common Service Centres' (CSCs). Thus, this paper will try to study CSCs in India with special reference to Mizoram.

Keywords: *E-Governance, Government, Common Service Centres, Online Services, Mizoram.*

Introduction

In the past few years, the world has seen enormous growth in information technology. The conflux of telecom and electronics has opened another possibility of transmission, stockpiling, and recovery of data at no other time. These are one of the main instruments utilised for navigation, in business endeavour as well as even in policy management. With this change, E-Governance suit a fundamental necessity as well as an indispensable piece for every country. Government agencies no longer stand alone in e-government. It is tied in with changing how governments work and rehash individuals cooperation in the democratic process, where E-Governance gives a stage to coordinate arrangements and administrations between Government-to-Citizens (G2C), Government-to-Business (G2B), and Government-to-Government (G2G). More importantly, engaging both the Government and the citizens more than ever (The Hindu Business Line, 2020). The Common Service Centres (CSCs), one of the most crucial components of E-Governance, are one of the 27 mission mode projects included in the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) 2006. It began operating on July 16,

2009, under the auspices of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY), Government of India. Its objective is to connect rural India through a national network of CSCs, which are providing a wide range of e-services at the grassroots level (Chauhan, 2009). In the northeastern states of India also, CSCs are established including in the state of Mizoram.

The Concept of E-Governance and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The term 'E-governance' refers to the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into all government operations to improve the capacity of the government to meet the requirements of the general public. The application of ICT for governance is commonly known as E-governance. According to UNESCO, "E-governance is the public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective." E-governance can bring forth new concepts of citizenship, both in terms of citizen needs and responsibilities. Its objective is to engage, enable and empower the citizen (Palvia Jain & Sharma, n.d.). ICT has two components: IT and CT, which stand for Information Technology for the former and Communication Technology for the latter respectively. IT refers to the use of technology for data storage, processing, manipulation, and collecting, whereas CT refers to the use of technology for telecommunication, broadcasting media, audio-visual processing, and information transmission over a wired or wireless network. So, ICT refers to the combination of IT and CT in which we acquire, analyse, and store data while also transferring or exchanging data around the globe via network or network telecommunication (Tamilselvan *et al*., 2012).

E-Government is what results from the combination of ICT and Governance. Therefore, we may define it as the improvement of the delivery of government services to citizens, businesses, and other government agencies through the use of information technology, particularly the internet. It makes it possible for citizens to communicate with and get services from the union, state, or municipal governments 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (AL-Zyadat, 2016).

Common Service Centres: An Overview

In 2006, the NeGP adopted the idea of CSCs as one of its mission mode projects. After operating under the NeGP for almost ten years, the project CSCs was renamed CSCs 2.0 in 2015 when a new government (National Democratic Alliance) under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi took office. It was once again included in the list of 31 Mission Mode Projects under the 'Digital India' initiative (MEITY, MMPs). The principles behind this plan are reiterated in Niti Aayog's Action Agenda; this agenda proposes policies to solve problems with the provision of essential public services, such as inefficiency and corruption (Inayat, 2017).

Table 1: List of Services offered through Common Service Centres (CSCs)

Sl. No	Contents	Sl. No	Contents
1	*Aadhaar Service*		
1.1	Aadhaar Service – Generation of Aadhaar	1.2	Aadhaar Service – E-KYC & Authentication
1.3	Aadhaar Service – Aadhaar Printing	1.4	Aadhaar Updates (UCL)
2	*Central G2C Services – PM Welfare Schemes*		
2.1	Ayushman Bharat Yojana	2.2	PM Fasal Bima Yojana
2.3	PM Ujjwala Scheme (LPG Booking)	2.4	PM – Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana
2.5	PM – Kisan Maan-dhan Yojana	2.6	PM – Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana
2.7	PM – Merchant Pension Yojana	2.8	PM – Kisan Credit Cards Yojana
2.9	PM – SVA Niddhi Yojana	2.10	E-Shram Registrations
3	*Other G2C Services*		
3.1	Election Commission Services	3.2	Passport Application
3.3	PAN Application	3.4	Swachh Bharat Abhiyan
3.5	FSSAI Registration/ Licence	3.6	Jeevan Pramaan
3.7	Udyam Jyoti Parichay	3.8	Recruitment Applications through CSCs
4	*State G2C Services*		
4.1	E- District Services	4.2	PDS Services
4.3	Labour Registration Services	4.4	E – Stamp
4.5	E-Vahan – Sarathi Transport Services	4.6	Himachal Swasthya Bima Yojana (HIMCARE)
4.7	Other State G2C Services Recruitment Services	4.8	Other State G2C Services – Municipal Services
4.9	Other State G2C Services – Fasal Bima Yojana	4.10	Other State G2C Services – Municipal Services
5	*Educational Services*		
5.1	Education Services – Digital Literacy	5.2	Various On-Line courses of NIELIT & NIOS, various courses of IGNOU, IITs, and Private Universities
5.3	Various courses of CSC Academy		
6	*Legal Services*		
6.1	Tele – Legal Consultation Services	6.2	E – Courts Services
7	*Financial Inclusion Services*		
7.1	Financial Inclusion – Banking Services	7.2	Financial Inclusion – Digi Pay (AEPS)
7.3	Financial Inclusion – Insurance Services	7.4	Financial Inclusion – NPS & APY
7.5	Financial Inclusion – Fastag Services	7.6	Financial Inclusion – CIBIL Registrations
8	*Tours & Travels*		

8.1	Tours & Travels – IRCTC Services	8.2	Tours & Travels – Other Services
9	**Utility Bill Payment Services**		
9.1	Utility Bill Payment – Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)	9.2	Utility Services – Electricity Bill Payment
9.3	Utility Services – Water Bill Payment	9.4	Utility Services – LPG Booking
10	**Healthcare Services**		
10.1	Healthcare Services – Tele-Medicine	10.2	Healthcare Services – Medicine Sales
10.3	Healthcare Services – Stree Swabhiman		
11	**Other B2C@ / B2B# Services**		
11.1	Grameen E-Store	11.2	Other Services – Products Distribution
11.3	Other Services – Agriculture Services	11.4	Other Services – Mobile / DTH Recharge
11.5	Other Services – IT Return Filing	11.6	Other Services - Diginame
12	**Skill Development**		
12.1	Skill Development: Schemes and Courses	12.2	Skill Development – Job Portals

Note: @B2C means Business to Citizens; #B2B means Business to Business.

Source: Unstarred Questions No. 3349, 'Services in CSC' answered by Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, on 23rd March 2022, Lok Sabha - Indian Parliament.

The possibility of the Common Service Centre (CSC) is to digitise the conveyance of specific government plans (like licenses, caste certificates, aadhaar, etc), and re-appropriate this to private 'Village Level Entrepreneurs' (VLEs) who will run CSCs. The vision is to have one CSC in every one of the 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats in the country. At the central level, CSC will operate in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode, and a Special Purpose Vehicle will be established to manage this programme and produce the necessary software. At the State level, the agreements to recruit and screen the VLWs are given and handled by privately owned businesses, called 'State Centre Agencies'. Anyone who possesses the bare requirements of money and digital infrastructure—including computers, biometric scanners, printers, etc can apply to become a VLE. Through CSCs, efficiency and convenience are promised to citizens in exchange for a little fee (MEITY Guidelines on CSC, 2015).

As of February 2022, a total of 4, 63,705 CSCs are functional across all States and Union Territories of India, out of which, 3, 63,887 CSCs are functional at Gram Panchayats (GP) /Village, level (Unstarred Questions No. 3349, 2022). Some of the services offered at CSC are under Aadhaar

Service like–Generation of Aadhaar; under Central G2C Services–PM Welfare Services people can acquire services like Ayuhsman Bharat Yojana, PM Fasal Bhima Yojana. Also, other G2C Services like Election Commission Services, Passport Application, and PAN Application can easily get it from CSCs. Under State G2C Services, E-District Services and PDS Services are offered. Services like Financial Inclusion Services, Legal Services, Educational Services, Health Care Services, Utility Bill Payment Services, Tours and Travels, Skill Development Services, and Other Business to Citizens (B2C) or Business to Business (B2B) Services are also offered (see **Table 1**).

Objectives of Common Service Centres 2.0

The following below mentioned some key objectives of CSCs 2.0:

1. Access to e-Services for rural residents without discrimination by transforming CSCs into full-service delivery hubs and employing the backend infrastructure already built as part of earlier Mission Mode Projects (MMPs).
2. Expansion of self-supporting CSC organization to incorporate 2.5 lakh CSCs, or possibly one CSC per town or gram panchayat, with numerous CSCs, liked.
3. Empowering the District e-Governance Society (DeGS) to carry out the plan under District Administration.
4. Establishing and bolstering the institutional framework for rollout and

project management, consequently assisting the State and District administrative apparatus and supporting the VLEs through local language help desk assistance.

5. Making service delivery at CSC outlets accountable, transparent, efficient, and traceable by enabling and consolidating online services under one digital platform and establishing a technology-driven interaction between all stakeholders.
6. Offering a centralised technology platform to deliver diverse services to citizens transparently.
7. Promoting women to become as VLEs and sharing the highest commission received from providing e-services will increase the viability of VLEs (MEITY Guidelines on CSC, 2015).

Envisaged Outcomes

1. 2.5 lakh CSCs that provide citizens with e-services through a self-sustaining network, one in each Gram Panchayat and Village (more than one would be preferred).
2. Direct communication between VLE and the government, with an empowered DeGS overseeing the district's network or CSC outlets to boost sustainability.
3. Establishing a framework to encourage the VLEs' entrepreneurial spirit by regularising their share of the profits made from the provision of services.
4. Increased CSC transactions thanks to the State, UT, and other service

providers facilitation of a wide array of services.

5. Consolidated service delivery using a common technology platform at all CSCs nationwide, making e-services, especially G2C services, available anywhere in the country. With a technology-driven link between all stakeholders, a regular framework of technologically driven monitoring of the CSC network through the universal technological platform would make the service delivery at CSCs outlets responsible, transparent, efficient, and traceable (MEITY Guidelines on CSC, 2015).

Implementation Framework

1. CSC 2.0 is a full-fledged entrepreneurial model, with States/UTs Administration facilitating the variables that would enable the CSC outlets to sustain themselves.

2. The States/UTs Administration, State Designated Agency (SDA), and DeGS will all be involved in the implementation of CSC 2.0 through the CSC Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), which is the agency in charge of doing so.

3. The States/UTs Administration may engage a third party through a proper process at the relevant DeGS level and would be functional within the DeGS framework, if the State/UT needs help from a third party to build up and operationalise the CSC network in selected Districts. These CSCs would have to abide by the project's principles for income sharing and

would be required to transact over the universal CSC technology platform that would be created for CSC 2.0.

4. To advance the growth of the CSC Network for a better service delivery process, a combined effort from all related Ministries/Departments such as the Department of Telecom, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the Ministry of Rural Development, etc is needed.

5. According to CSC 2.0, revenue sharing with VLEs should account for at least 80 per cent of the money from commission on transactions, with the remaining 20 per cent going to other stakeholders to ensure the viability of VLEs.

6. CSC 2.0 envisions the creation of a comprehensive, all-encompassing technology CSC platform to enhance service delivery. For the CSC 2.0 deployment, a CSC Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) would be needed to make the platform live. It would be a secure cloud-based platform (MEITY Guidelines on CSC, 2015).

Digital Northeast Vision 2022

Digital North East Vision 2022 is part of the nationwide Digital India Programme focusing on the strengths of the North Eastern Region. It highlights the opportunities for growth and development, and outlines the strategies and specific initiatives to achieve digital empowerment for all the citizens in each state in the North East. On July 30th, 2017 in Guwahati, Assam, then honourable Minister of Electronics and Information Technology,

Government of India Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad unveiled the vision and strategy for the 'Digital North East 2022'. The vision statement places a strong emphasis on utilising digital technologies to improve people's quality of life, ensure inclusive and sustainable growth, and transform the lives of North East Indians. This increases the government's goals for bringing the advantages of digitization to every resident of North East India (Digital North-East Vision 2022, 2018).

The Digital North East 2022 vision statement lists CSCs as one of the digital thrust areas under Digital Infrastructure. Through the implementation of CSCs, citizens can now access a variety of services, such as agriculture, education, and health care, at reasonable prices, especially in isolated areas of the North Eastern Region where connectivity is challenging due to the region's hilly terrain. Common Service Centres also generate employment prospects, particularly for women and young people, as the majority of VLEs come from this category (Digital North-East Vision 2022, 2018).

Common Service Centres in Mizoram

Common Service Centres in the state of Mizoram were undertaken by the Mizoram State e-Governance Society (MSeGS). It is created under the Society Registration Act XXI of 1860 in the year 2005 as the State Designated Agency and Zoram Electronics Development Corporation Ltd (ZENICS) as the implementing partner of E-governance projects in Mizoram till 2014, but ZENICS Pvt. Ltd was disbanded in the year 2014 due

to an unspecific reason. Now Mizoram State e-Governance Society are the main agency for implementing CSCs in Mizoram. The Department of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, which is part of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY), is the funding source for this initiative (Memorandum of Association and Rules and Regulations for MSeGS, 2005). The MSeGS main goal is to manage the E-governance project's execution for the benefit of all people by establishing the necessary requirements like administrative, financial, legal, and technological framework, implementation mechanism, and resources for the Government of Mizoram. In the state of Mizoram, MSeGS has also established a number of CSCs which provides various public services and are located more conveniently or near to the people (Memorandum of Association and Rules and Regulations for MSeGS, 2005).

The CSCs importance cannot be underestimated especially in a state like Mizoram with difficult geographical terrain and infrastructure, it's necessary to provide various public services to the people very close to them. People in Mizoram may now quickly receive a variety of public services from the closest delivery point at a reasonable price and skip the long queues at government offices thanks to the CSCs. Because of this, it saves time, energy, and money on transportation, especially for those who live in rural and isolated places (Lalduhawmi, 2018). **Table 2** shows the current number of CSCs district wise in Mizoram. A total of 869 CSCs existing in Mizoram out of which in Aizawl District,

Table 2: No. of Common Service Centres in Mizoram (District Wise)

No	District	No. of Common Service Centres
1.	Aizawl	223
2.	Lunglei	125
3.	Lawngtlai	120
4.	Mamit	101
5.	Kolasib	99
6.	Serchhip	70
7.	Champhai	55
8.	Saitual	27
9.	Siaha	19
10.	Hnahthial	18
11.	Khawzawl	12
	Total	**869**

Source: Data collected from Mizoram State E-Governance Society on 7ᵗʰ April 2022.

the most densely populated area has a large number of CSCs with a total of 223 CSCs, followed by the second largest district in terms of population Lunglei District with a total number of 125 CSCs, Lawngtlai District 120 CSCs etc.

Conclusion

Despite living in the modern age, there are still areas in government administration that require specific attention like public delivery service, reducing corruption, making officials accountable, etc. India is fast developing in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) but how to use this new technology which is constantly evolving to digitally empower the common masses. Across the entire country,

there is a need to improve governance, so that the common people who are the real ruler of this country don't face many problems in accessing even the basic public services. So, with the help of ICTs, the most common issue of the public related to the delivery of public services can be improved. Therefore, in the 21ˢᵗ century, E-governance if implemented successfully, will not only deliver various public services to people more transparently and effectively, but also empower the people, which is the goal of Good Governance.

References

AL-Zyadat, Alaa (2016). E Government Systems and its Impact on Quality of Service at Public Hospitals in Amman (Filed Study). *International Journal of Management (IJM),7*(6), 2.

Chauhan, Radha (2009). National E-Governance Plan in India. United Nations University-International Institute of Software and Technology Report No. 414, 7.

Inayat, Anaita Sabhikhi (2017). 'No Man's Land: Tale of Common Service Centre', *The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy*. Retrieved from: https://www.thehinducentre.com/the-arena/currentissues/article9881757ece.

Lalduhawmi, Tracy (2018). Developmental Impact of E-Governance. *International Journal of Science and Engineering*, *3*(2), 1-4.

Memorandum of Association and Rules and Regulations for MSeGS (2005),

Planning and Programme Implementation Department, Government of Mizoram.

MEITY Guidelines on CSC, 2015. Retrieved from: https://csc.gov.in/implementationguidelines.

MEITY (2018) Report on: Digital North-East Vision 2022. Retrieved from: https://www.meity.gov.in/digital-north-east-2022.

MEITY Website, Government of India, on Digital India Retrieved from: https://www.meity.gov.in/content/mission-mode-rojects.

Palvin Jain, C., & Sharma, S. (n.d.). E-Government and E-Governance: Definitions / Domain Framework and Status Around The World, 3. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268411808.

Tamilsevan, N., Shivakumar, N. *et al*., (2012). Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). *International Journal of Library and Information Science*, *1*(2), 17-18.

The Hindu Business Line. (2020) 'e-Governance: The Keyto Empower Citizens'. Retrieved from: https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/brandhub/e-governance-the-key-to-empower-citizens/article30735005ece.

Unstarred Questions No. 3349, 'Services in CSC' answered by Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, on 23rd March 2022, Lok Sabha - Indian Parliament.