

COMMUNITIES, TECHNOLOGY, PARTICIPATION



Pictures from
NEMMADI TELECENTRES
taken at a Centre
in Anekal, India

NEMMADI TELECENTRES – FINDINGS

1. Telecentres were implemented to provide common services such as land records, birth, death and caste certificates, etc.
2. Social and political networks continue to play an important role in accessing these services even through tele-centres.
3. Thus, tele-centres have become intertwined with the local politics of the village and the larger caste and political economy dynamics of the region.
4. Intermittent power supply, long waiting periods and fuzzy legalities involved in the issue of land records continue to dominate despite the cost-efficiency and streamlined service delivery claims of tele-centres.
5. Replacing human interaction with ICTs in the delivery of government services appears not to be the way to achieve efficiency, transparency, accountability and good governance.
6. ICTs instead need to be placed as one of the many avenues available to rural citizens to access services.

School Information Management – FINDINGS

1. School functions can be classified under content, academic and administrative.
2. Lack of infrastructure, awareness and interest prevent Technology from affecting classrooms.
3. Reporting is aided by proprietary tech solutions at the higher order, but the last mile where teachers spend 30% of their teaching time in manual data entry and reporting has no tech intervention.
4. School officials have very limited knowledge of Tech trends.
5. Challenges of language and contextual data exist.

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do communities develop through use of different technologies including open source software, mapping tools, ICTs and e-governance technologies?
- How does technology configure/reconfigure the make-up and dynamics of existing communities?
- How do costs of developing, maintaining and sustaining technology impact what technologies will finally be made available to people?
- How does the “cost” factor influence decisions to standardize and localize technologies? How do standardization and localization of technologies, in turn, affect implementation and use of technology and participation of communities?
- What factors enable communities to participate more in using and developing technologies?
- Do open source technologies enable greater participation than proprietary software? If so, what factors regarding open source technologies propel such participation?

METHODOLOGY

- Case Study approach examination of three cases where e-governance (Nemmadi tele-centres in Karnataka), mapping (rehabilitation of slum dwellers in Mumbai) and open source (School Information System developed by Servalots for schools) technologies have been /are being implemented.
- Development of school information system according to the needs expressed by teachers and school management.
- Interviews with teachers, villagers, tele-centre operators, rehabilitated slum dwellers, technology developers and policy-makers to understand issues concerning implementation and use of technologies.
- Participant observation in village and school settings to develop a grounded conceptualization of participation and communities.

Pictures from Government Schools, URBAN BANGALORE

