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## COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRES IN NAGALAND WITH EMPHASIS ON MEDZIPHEMA BLOCK

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### Abstract

*The paper highlights the information needs and users' dependence for information on Community Information Centres (CIC) in Nagaland with emphasis on Medziphema block. It also focuses on the effort needed for imparting computer literacy, information literacy for preparing and powering the underprivileged rural masses through the use of ICTs in such community centres. An attempt is made to reduce the challenges faced by disadvantaged communities such as lack of suitable skill set, language barriers and low literacy in using ICTs and the Internet through a simple, consistent and easy-to-use interface that requires low level competence from users and through accessibility to the use of multiple media (textual, audio, visual).*

**Keywords :** Rural information; E-Governance; Computer literacy; CICs Information literacy.

### 1. Introduction

India has a population of about 361 million in 1951 to over 1 billion in 2004, and on the other hand, over 741 million individual live in rural sector, and 72% live in rural areas and live off farm related income, where 250 million are estimated to be below poverty line.

In the country, we have the urban (industrialized) India and rural (agricultures) India. The needs, methods, processes and infrastructure required for the two are quite different. Rural society is varied and multi faceted. It is commonly believed that the basic human needs of each category of land user will be better addressed if they have access to the right information. Although the decision process is far more complex, it is true that, parallel to the hierarchy of user needs, there is related "hierarchy" of information needs. There is great disparity in rural and urban literacy because education concentrated in urban areas and rural areas were neglected. Rural literacy is 59.4% which urban literacy is 80.03%. Rural poverty is higher than urban because development programs too concentrated in urban areas. Rural poverty is 50.2% while urban poverty is 24%. Mainly due to lack of infrastructure, rural people depend on rains for agriculture, which is very unpredictable in this part of world. Lack of agriculture based small-scale industries further deteriorated the scene. Child labour due to poverty is very common so child illiteracy also prevail under these situations, which prevails in India for more than thousand of years that resulted high percentage of illiteracy.

The main role of rural information is to provide the basic information to the rural masses according to their needs. Kaula (2001) stated and discussed the rural information services that should be

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offered to the rural folk. He proposed the information service at the grass root level with the following points:

- Educating the illiterate and neo-literates
- Information service to women and children
- Information on social evil
- Information to the farmers

## **2. About CIC**

India has enacted Information Technology (IT) Act which provides legal framework to facilitate electronic commerce and electronic transaction and recognizes electronic contracts, prevention of computer crimes, electronic filing/documentation, digital signature, etc. In line with the Global practices, the vital security needs of privacy, authenticity, integrity and non-repudiation over the internet in India are being addressed by the Public Key Infrastructure.

The government has set-up Community Information Centres (CICs) at 487 block headquarters in the seven North East states and Sikkim as a part of the PM's agenda for socio economic development of the region. These CICs aimed at combating escalating crises in health, energy, water, education and literacy as well as poverty alleviation. The CICs will provide internet connectivity, e-mail facilities, interface between citizens and government, distance learning programs, information on national programmes, disaster management system, public health awareness, etc., to the public. CIC is a major initiative from the government of India to utilize IT (Information Technology) as a cutting edge tool of development for the North Eastern States including Sikkim. The Government of India plans to establish 487 CICs by 15th August 2002. Through these CICs people in that region will avail the benefits of Global connectivity through Internet. These CICs are equipped with computer peripherals along with VSATs Satellite Communication.

The establishment of the CICs constitutes a tremendously challenging task in view of the remoteness of the area and the difficult mountainous terrain. In a region where good communication is lacking, satellite based links to the world outside will usher in a revolution in socio-economic development. The establishment of Community Information Centres (CICs) has been envisaged as a means to use the benefits of Information Technology (IT) to raise the socio-economic conditions of the people of India particularly those in the remote areas of the North Eastern states. 33 Blocks have been covered under the project implemented during 2000-2002. These CICs will help the region avail the benefits of global connectivity through Internet and will also help the state government to plan for IT base citizen-centric applications making government services available through it. Under the project, computers, peripherals along with VSATs for satellite communication have been placed at designated locations in each block in the State.

### **2.1 Objectives of CICs**

- To establish IT infrastructure at the block level
- To create IT awareness amongst the local populace
- To provide Internet services such as E-mail and Web access

- To conduct computer based training programmes
- To provide Citizen Centric services
- To provide access to Socio-Economic databases
- To facilitate distance education
- To use IT tools for sustainable regional development

## 2.2 Scope of CICs

Computer and communication infrastructure have been set up in each block and are located in a Community and Rural Development building. In order to ensure uninterrupted communication, the Centres are connected through a satellite based computer communication network. Each CIC is equipped with a VSAT, computer systems, printers and networking equipment.

The CICs will not only facilitate the region to avail the benefits of global connectivity through Internet, but will also bring the region closer, emotionally, to the national mainstream by enabling more efficient and faster information flow amongst the people, State Governments and the Central Government.

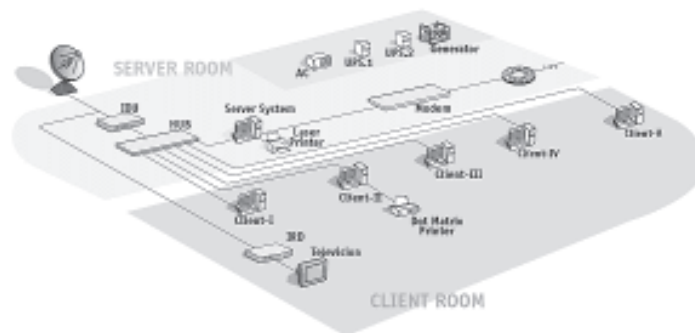
Establishment of CICs will help bridge the digital divide between the North East and the rest of the country. Local language interfaces are expected to be provided for Citizen Centric services. These services will entail an IT-enabled interface for public dealings of the government. Some examples are Comprehensive House hold Survey, MPLAD Schemes, Schemes for the underprivileged, Local Market information and so on. There will be an increased awareness of IT especially under the IGNOU programme where a course on Computer Literacy Programme (CLP) was launched in almost all the CIC centres. The project creates a knowledge based society and skill enhancement in the blocks. Internet access will tremendously benefit college goers and professionals among others.

## 2.3 Site Profile

Every CIC in the region is equipped with the following infrastructure:

Sl. No.	Name of Item	No. of Items
1	VSAT	1
2	Server	1
3	Clients	5
4	Printers	2
5	LAN HUB	1
6	Modem	1
7	UPS one 1KVA	1
8	UPS one 2KVA	1
9	LAN	
10	TV	1
11	Web Camera	1

### CIC infrastructural architecture



### 3. G2C services

Some of the G2C services, which are proposed to be disseminated from the centers, are:

- Web site containing information about the block, educational facilities, health facilities, places of interest, etc
- An Education Portal listing the various opportunities in Education Institutions in North Eastern States & outside
- A Job Portal containing various employment opportunities in the State & outside
- Prices of agricultural products and essential commodities on the Web
- Downloadable standard forms on the Web
- Web enabled appointment schedule for various medical facilities
- Telephone Directory
- Government tenders
- Newspaper headlines
- School Board Results
- Block projects information system
- Generating pay slips, maintaining personnel information of Government employees at the block offices
- Public Information Facilitation Center
- Public Grievances Redress and Monitoring System
- Comprehensive Survey of Households
- Gramodaya database to be created
- Vehicle Registration System
- Rural Bazaar
- Web enabled electricity bill payment system

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- Cause list for the courts.
  - Arms License Issuance System
  - Issue of Certificates to Handicapped persons, Rural Area certificates, Caste certificates, Birth & Death certificate, Character Verification certificate, Certificate of Residence, Succession Certificate for Legal Heirs
  - Issue of Licenses to Cinema Halls, Video Parlours & Guest houses
  - Financial Assistance Schemes of the State Government
  - File Movement System for all the Branches of DC Office

#### **4. E-Governance in Nagaland through CIC**

In Nagaland with a view to enhance transparency, efficiency and provide quality & prompt services to its citizens National Informatics Centre (NIC) was entrusted to chalk out a plan detailing the existing status, proposed activities, roles and responsibilities, and implementation methodology. Accordingly, First Draft of the Action Plan has been prepared and submitted to Government of Nagaland for consideration.

The proposed design of IT infrastructure & E-Governance services envisages setting up of NAGALAND-ONLINE (<http://nagalandonline.nic.in>) connecting the State Secretariat with District, ADC/SDO and CIC at Block level offices of the various departments along with VDBs for secured transmission of voice, data and video. The various services falling into category of G2C, G2B (if any, with the government approval) and G2G will be offered in integrated manner through the portal acting as a single gateway.

**IntraNaga Portal (G2E and E2G):** This web portal (<http://intranaga.nic.in>) would capture all the requirements catering to employee of government departments. Each of the departments should continuously provide the content and ensure that the portal information is current.

**e-Delivery:** Delivery of services has to be one stop agenda for achieving digital democracy. Every information and service should be delivered over one's preferred medium like CICs, Web, Kiosk, IVRS and ICSC at Kohima and Dimapur.

#### **Major IT projects to be taken up phases wise in Nagaland**

- Citizen Relation Management Centre (CzRMC)-: Back End State level
- Operations Naga-Smart Village Net:
- School-Net:
- Integrated Citizen Service Centres (ICSC)
- Treasuries
- Commercial Taxes
- RD-Net
- Modernization of Information & Public Relation functions:
- Capacity Building

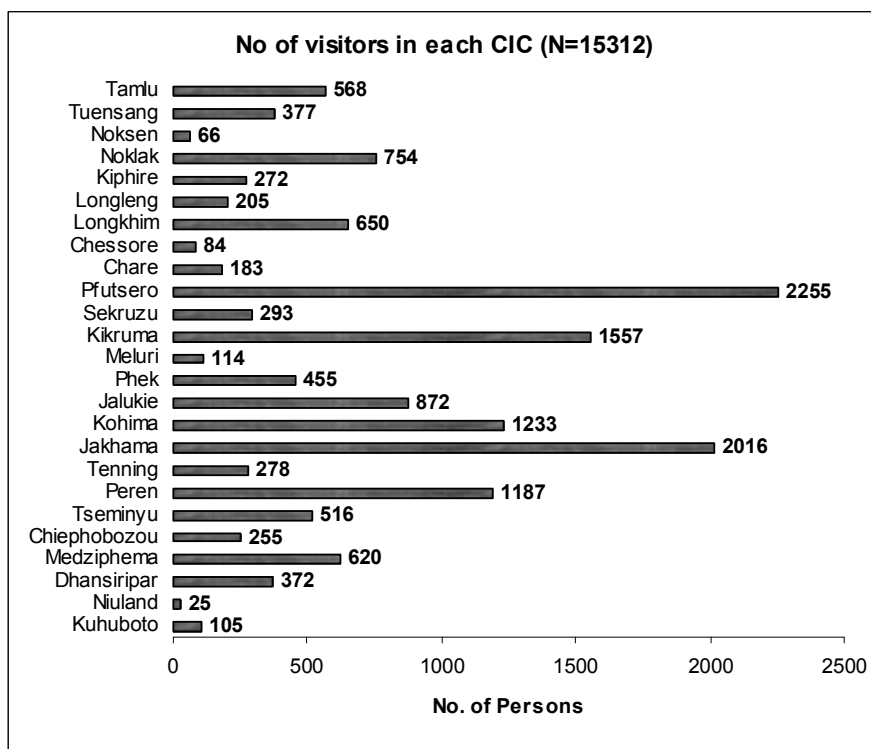
- e-Literacy among masses & Elected Representatives
- Monitoring Mechanism

### Web-link for CIC blocks

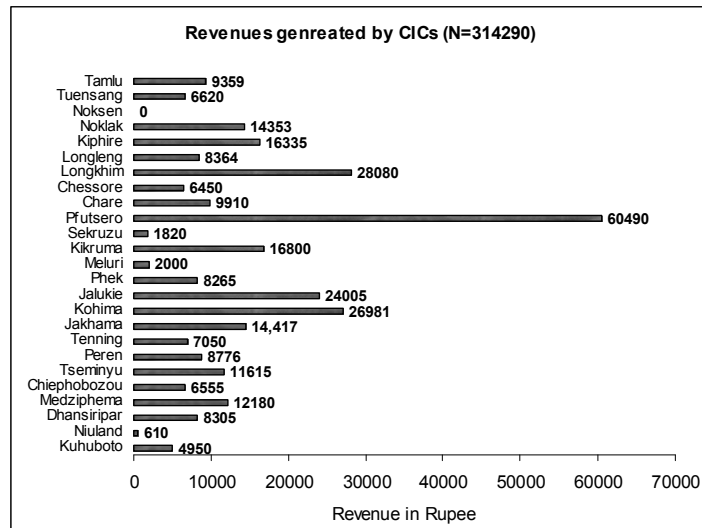
Nagaland has a total number 52 CIC block. The local website of Nagaland is <http://nagaland.nic.in>, where general information about the town and village markets can be availed. All The block level URLs are found in this site.

### Statistics of selected CIC blocks in the year 2005

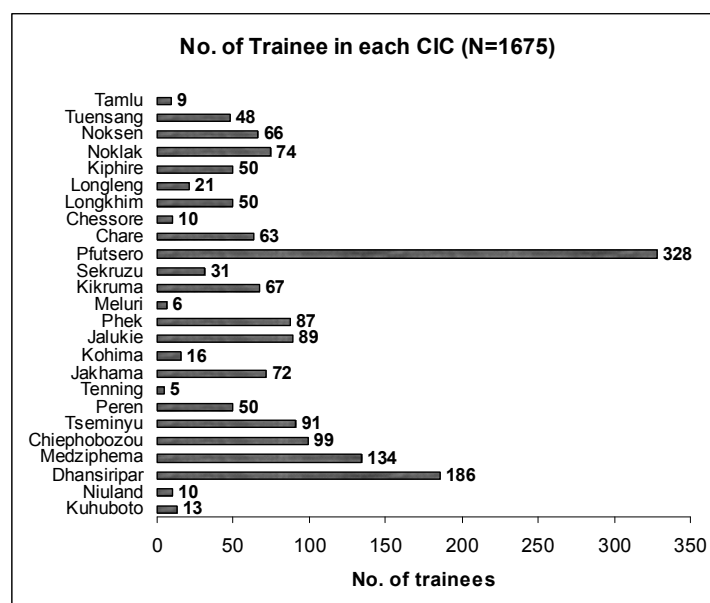
CIC is a self help centre, where daily maintenance is acquired through minimal surfing fees to the users of CIC. Out of 52 CIC block 25 block revenues have been analyze.



The total number of visitors recorded in these CICs is 15312. Pfutsero recorded a maximum of 2255 visitor while Niuland being located near Dimapur recorded a very low usage of 25 visitors only. The average visitor per centre is 612.48.



The total number of revenues generated by these centre is Rs. 3,14,290/-. Out the total revenue generated Pfutsero again shows the highest amount of Rs. 60,490/- while Noksen which is located in a very remote place of the state generates no money. This is mainly due to its geographical location. The average revenue generated per centre stands at Rs.12,571/-.



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Once again Pfutsero recorded the maximum number of trainees and Tenning shows the lowest of only 5 persons. Noksen shows a decent amount of 66 persons though located in a remote area. The number of trainees seems to rely heavily on the quality of staff employed in the respective centre. The total number trained by these centres is 1675 persons. On an average the centres trained 67 persons per centre.

Out of these 52 Blocks, the semi-urban Blocks like Pfutsero have outstanding trainee and revenue compared to urban sectors like Dimapur block and Kohima block. This is a result of absence of Internet connectivity to the remote area but with larger number of IT literates. Kohima and Dimapur with high rate of literacy and ready infrastructure available have the least number of revenues and trainee since commercial cyber cafes and institutes are readily available in these towns. A remote block like Tening and Noksen have a fewer responds due to its strategic location and larger number of agricultural community and poor infrastructure such as electricity and communication. After analysis the data, Pfutsero CIC block was found to be the consistent in regards to the number of trainee and the revenue generated.

## **5. Activities and other informations in Medziphema Block**

Right from the time of inception the block started seminars on the need of computer education among the students' populations in particular and community in general. Emphasizing on the advancing modern technology, more and more sophisticated machines are on the use, so even the Nagas need to catch up with the dynamic world and that's by firstly learning what is this computer which have really moved human being towards its curious nature. We did notice that many were very interested in learning computer, even older citizens, leave aside the young generations. As per the notice to train interested candidates for 15 days, we started with the staff of SDO (C) right from peon to UDA, but we did find that 15 days wasn't really enough because they did not have any background about computer. So, on 22nd August 2002 we started our training with 36 students till 25th September 2002, collecting Rs. 20/- as per the instruction given to us, we taught them computer basic and brief of MS-OFFICE. During this month we have trained 3 pastors (AO, Lotha & Chakhesang) and one women leader too. Again in the month of October and November we enrolled 32 candidates, here too we charged Rs. 20/- each.

## **6. Setbacks and Suggestion**

The impact of CIC in Medziphema is satisfactory, where the numbers of clients are increasing day by day, the response is satisfactory. Several batches have completed the courses conducted by the centre. Unfortunately, most of the respondents are from the educated group of the community such as school going students, and the targeted group such as the rural farmers is seldom seen in the centre. Cics' aims and objectives appear ideal, but proper evaluation is needed for maximum utilization of the centre. During the course of study it was observe that some of the centre is not able to meet the project's aim and objectives. Some of the setbacks are:-

- The people of the region are generally uneducated and poor. Due to illiteracy and lack of awareness programme in information technology, the community is facing a hard time availing the system.



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- Some section of the community within the town and a vast section of the community in the nearby villages are totally ignorant of the CIC's existence.
  - The centre does not provide extra funds to purchase latest hardware and software equipments, as the projects fund allotment is limited.
  - There is negligence on the part of the state government as the CIC projects are totally run by the central government.
  - Public awareness programme to the rural community is lacking, instead there is an assumption that the centre is setup mainly for the utilization of the SDO (Civil) employees.
  - The building in which the CIC is housed is inadequately small.
  - Electrical wiring is not adequate and there is no proper earth connection which is risky for the systems component.
  - There is no staff to look after the cleaning of the centre and a chowkidar to look after the CIC.
  - The surfing rate of the CIC is too expensive for the farming section of the community.

Taking these drawbacks there is a need for improvement of the centre. Some of the suggestions that should be implemented and given due consideration by the Government of India and the concern state government are.

- The computer Units should be increase in responds to the user's requirements.
- CIC operators should be more interactive and easy to approach. In other words, they should be aware of the user's needs.
- The Block Development Officer should take full responsibility towards the center's functioning and maintenance.
- PC Gaming, Chatting should be given second priority and any misuse should be prohibited.
- In order to provide the right information at the right time the operator should be well equipped with search engines and the available databases for accessing the right sites.
- Distance education should be encouraged within the centre.
- Awareness programme should be conducted in the neighboring villages' schools and colleges.
- The post of the operator should be regularized to facilitate his full commitment to the centre
- Salary of the operator should be increased and regular training should be conducted to equip them with the latest information.

## **7. Conclusion**

The community information centres and village knowledge centres are the recent additions to this effort that would transform India into an information society, where information and knowledge resources are considered as critical ingredient for development. But problem is with the effective and efficient use, consumption and evaluation of information resources, so that informed citizen can take right decisions. Here information literacy can play a vital role in educating the users of libraries on various information and documentary resources, where to start searching of information, what where and how to access them, how to assess and compare retrieved information, how to communicate their information or findings to the general masses and experts, and so on. In addition to borrow books for entertainment and leisure, community information centres can also disseminate

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information on community development, best practices, literature, culture, trade, education, etc. which may be further elaborated when needs arise. Information seekers may want consolidated or exhaustive information. To provide right information to the users, operators should be trained to develop information literacy competency and should be able to educate the user that will make user information literate.

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