

Sustainability of Digital Intermediaries in Rural Development: A case study of e-Gram Vishwagram project of Gujarat, India

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Introduction

- The Global South faces challenges in successfully integrating rural population in its development interventions.
- **Digital Intermediaries: The Crucial Link**
 1. Connecting, trust building and Integrating with Institutions.
 2. Inclusive development objectives, the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)-led development initiatives.
 3. Effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and participation in the development process.
 4. Awareness among various stakeholders.

Research Method and Theoretical Framework

Mixed method Quantitative and qualitative analysis based on the primary and secondary data.

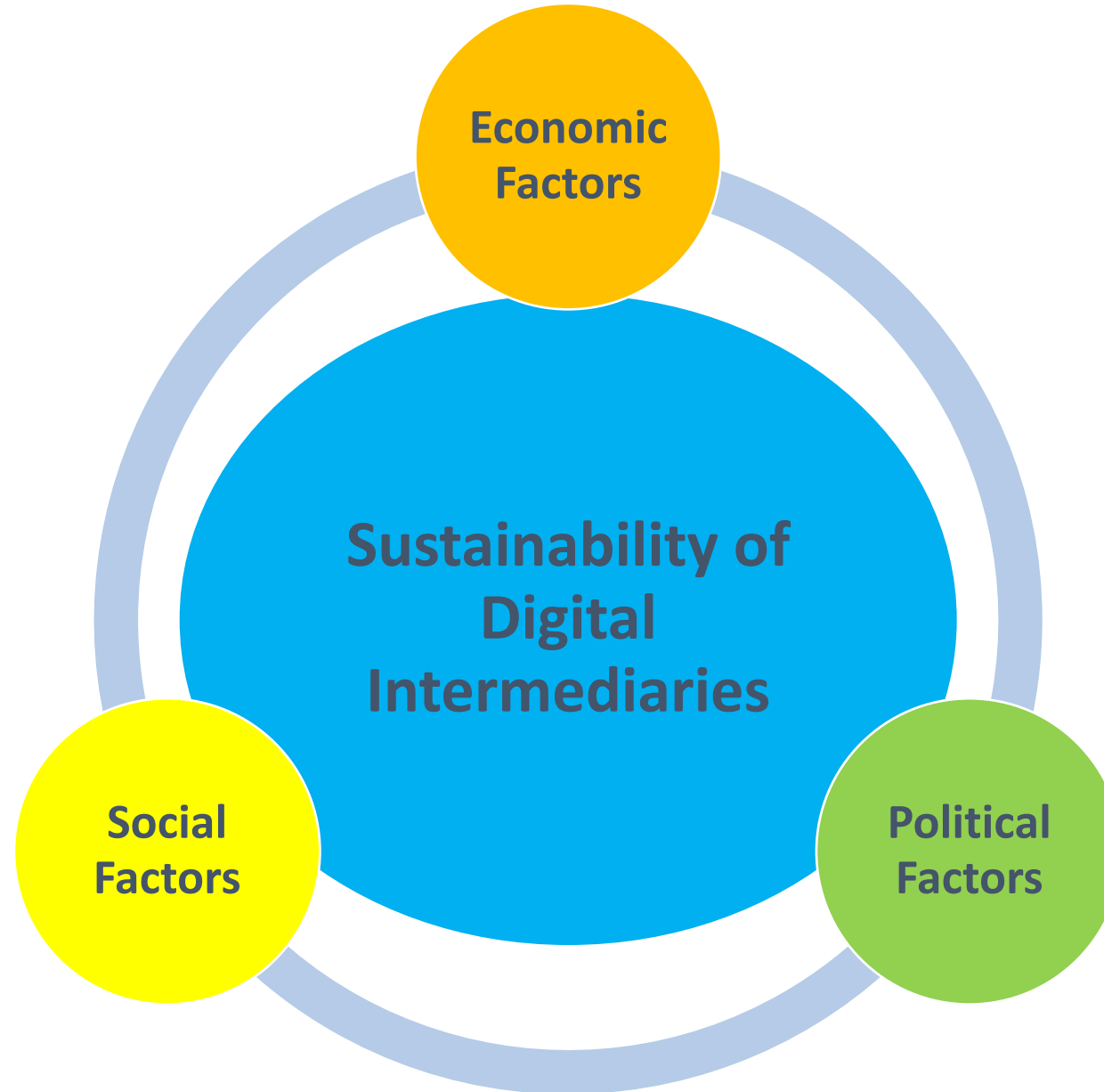
Primary data- Interviews, Survey

Secondary data- Gujarat state government websites, published articles, internal reports. Content analysis is used to analyse the data.

Theoretical Framework

Actor Network Theory (ANT)

Factors Affecting the Sustainability of the Intermediaries



Telecentres in India

- **Telecentres (Common Service Centres- CSCs)**
- Vision: Non-discriminatory access to e-service for rural citizen.
- Expansion of self-sustaining CSCs network.
- Creating and strengthening the institutionalisation for rollout and project management.
- Transparent service delivery.
- Increasing sustainability of Village Level Entrepreneurs (Digital intermediaries).

Digital Intermediaries in Indian Case Study

Central Government

State Government

Gram Panchayats (250 345)

Establishment of telecentres in gram panchayats operated by digital intermediaries (159 633).

Connecting more than 600 000 villages to achieve development objectives

About the E-Gram-telecentres Project Vishwagram

Vision : Empowering people through popular participation towards prosperity and sustainable development in rural Gujarat.

Objective : Bridging the digital divide between rural & urban area.

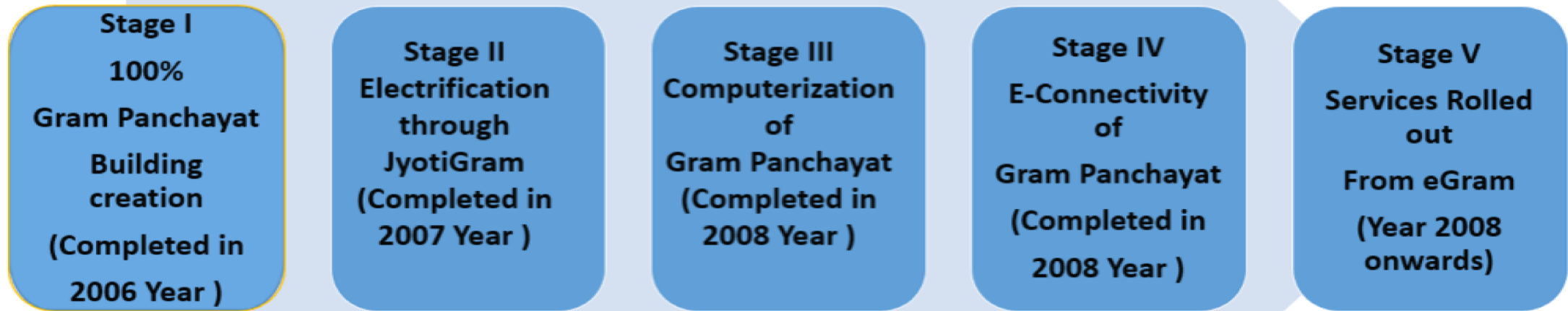
Total e-Gram telecentres 14004, 249 Blocks Panchayats, 33 Districts.

Infrastructure.



Only for indication purpose

Stages of E-Gram Telecentre Project



Source: Government of Gujarat (2017)

Digital Intermediaries

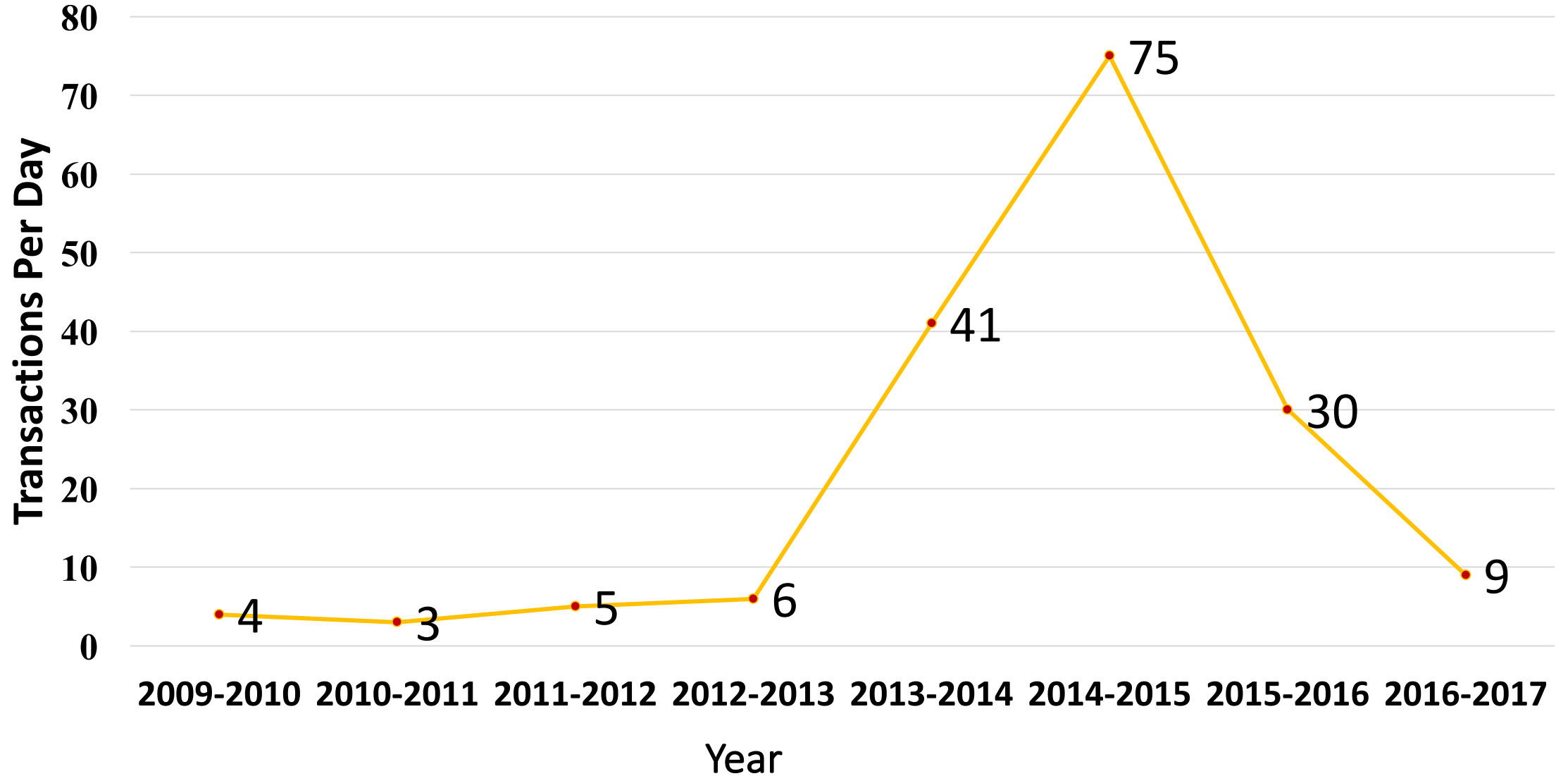
Sustainability of Digital Intermediaries

Sustainability of the digital intermediaries is inferred as the monetary resources generated by delivering the e-services. The nature of income should be regular, consistent with the incremental rate.

Information's about the E-Gram telecentres digital intermediaries

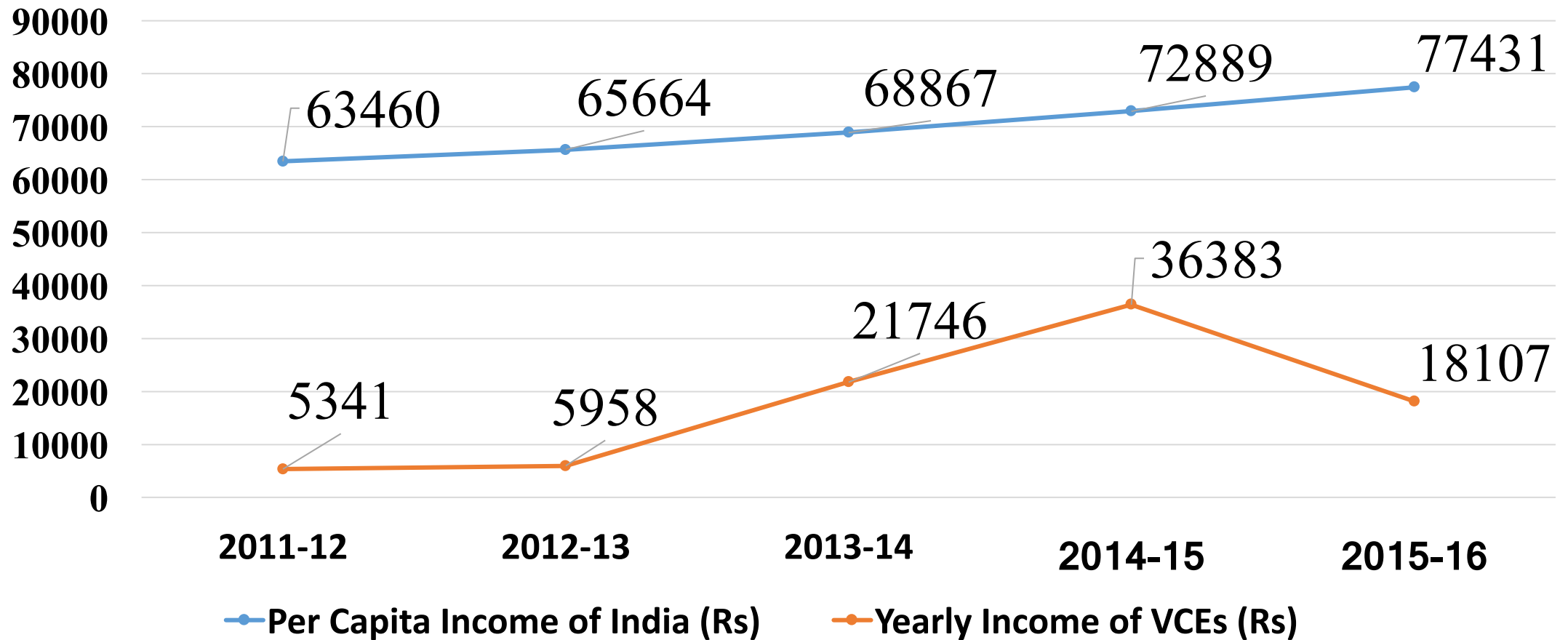
- Computer literate from near by regions.
- Partner in services delivery.
- Income on the basis of commission of delivery services.

Telecentres transactions per day



Source: Government of Gujarat (2017)

Income comparison of incomes of digital intermediaries (VCEs) and per capita income of India



Source: Government of Gujarat (2017) and Gol (2017)

Challenges faced by the digital intermediaries

- People have low awareness about the services.
- Limited number of services access.
- Low relevance of currently available services.
- Competitors.
- Uneven demand of services.
- Uneven distribution of entrepreneurial environment to connect and identify opportunities.
- Lack of resources to offer new services.
- Inadequate cooperation from the government.
- Charges of issuing certificates not updating regularly.
- Minimum income.
- Adaptation strategy.

Recommendations

- Regular updating of services and creating awareness about telecentres through active role of government and private partners.
- Partnership among digital intermediaries to learn and grow.
- Regular availability of work through work distribution management among the digital intermediaries.
- Innovate to create new services based on the local needs and encourage the digital intermediaries to act as an entrepreneurs to capture opportunities.
- Sustainability in form of multiplier effect.

Current Status of Telecentres in India

- Total functional Telecentres 2.5 Lakh, 1.59 Lakh established at the gram panchayats and total of around 2.9 lakh registered telecentres across India, more than 10 lakh employment, and 34000 Women digital intermediaries.
- Partnerships with private companies to use as a distribution partners.
- Partnership to spread education through telecentres.
- Enabling telecentres to promote textiles clusters.
- Distribution of FMCG products, public sector partnership- IFFCO, distributors.
- GST training, e-payment training.

Policy Implication

- Sustainability of the telecentres.
- Digital intermediaries.
- Strengthening the digital network.
- Innovation in service delivery and bringing new services.
- Achieving the development objectives.

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Thank You

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