Delivering government services to the BOP in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh: Telecenters, mobile or both?

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Both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have embarked on ICT-enabled development initiatives

• e-Sri Lanka and Digital Bangladesh both aim to deliver public services via ICTs, both include large components on reforming government processes via re-engineering and automation
  – Large telecenter projects included to support BOP connectivity
    • Nenasalas in Sri Lanka - 632 Nenasalas since 2005
    • Union Information and Service Centers (UISCs) in Bangladesh - 4,495 UISCs since 2009
Survey conducted in Q3 2012 in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka

• Target population
  BOP (SEC D & E) living within 5km of a telecenter, aged 15-40
  – (SEC or socio-economic classification is based on the highest education level and occupation of household chief wage earner)

• Sampling
  Stratified random sampling of telecenters: representation of provinces (Sri Lanka) and division (in Bangladesh)
  – 90 telecenters, 1800 respondents in Sri Lanka
  – 275 telecenters, 2750 respondents in Bangladesh

• Screening question
  Have you had any “interaction” with the government in the last 12 months?
  – Obtain information: To obtain information on the government and its services
  – Obtain/access services: To use a government service, or “get something done”
Aware of telecenters (% of catchment area residents)

- Bangladesh: 33% aware of telecenters, 67% have never heard of them.

- Sri Lanka: 54% aware of telecenters, 46% have never heard of them.

Have used a telecenter (% of residents who have heard of telecenters)

- Bangladesh: 48% have used a telecenter, 52% have not.

- Sri Lanka: 84% have used a telecenter, 16% have not.
In Bangladesh, some government services are on the top 10 list of services accessed (% of telecenter users)

- Computer with Internet
- Mobile phone assistance (e.g., upload of content, etc)
- Training programs
- Scanning
- Agriculture/health/law consultancy
- Birth registration
- Access to government/state/citizen services
- Photography (e.g., passport photos)
- Printing
- Photocopy
More Bangladeshi users obtained information on government services through information and contacts accessed at the telecenter.

- Bangladesh: 71%
- Sri Lanka: 21%
Location may be a key reason for low use in Sri Lanka

• More competition for telecenters in Sri Lanka
  28% of telecenter users in Bangladesh used other alternatives (Internet cafe) to telecenters while it was 56% in Sri Lanka

• Telecenters located within religious establishments in Sri Lanka
  Use higher amongst residents living near a telecenter located in non-religious establishments (26%) compared to those residing near telecenters located in a religious establishment (8%)

• Some telecenters in Bangladesh are situated at or adjacent to the local government office (Union Parishad office)
  Improve the perception of legitimacy of the telecenter
Range of services offered and greater need in Bangladesh may also explain the high use of it

• The telecenter operators have access to government forms and relevant information through a log-in system
  – Equipped to assist citizens in filling up relevant forms and submitting them online. These services are not available in Sri Lanka

• Greater need for telecenters in Bangladesh?
  – Lower literacy/education → need for assistance
  – Lower income and ICT ownership
    Household access to a computer- 14% in Sri Lanka vs 3% in Bangladesh
  – Government info/services are easier to access in Sri Lanka
Best way to obtain information on government and its services (% of catchment areas residents)

- Visit central government offices in Colombo/Dhaka
- Visit local government offices in nearest town/village
- Through a telecenter
- Through some other local authorized party in the community
- Through a phone call
- Through a government website (Internet)
- Other

Sri Lanka

Bangladesh

- Visit central government offices in Colombo/Dhaka: 66%
- Visit local government offices in nearest town/village: 52%
- Through a telecenter: 35%
- Through some other local authorized party in the community: 7%
- Through a phone call: 8%
- Through a government website (Internet): 2%
- Visit local government offices in nearest town/village: 1%
- Other: 1%
- Visit central government offices in Colombo/Dhaka: 3%
Openness to receiving government services through mobiles

- 52% of survey respondents in Bangladesh and 77% in Sri Lanka are open to receiving government information via a mobile.

Preferred way of receiving information on government and its services is via calls

(% of those that would like to receive govt info via a mobile)
Recommendations

Sri Lanka

• Co-locate telecenters near or inside local government offices

• Avoid locating telecenters in areas where other commercially-provided public Internet access is already available or inside religious institutions

• Empower telecenter operators to submit forms online on behalf of others

• Engage in awareness programs to promote the use of telecenters to poor citizens

Bangladesh

• Establish a call center where they can obtain information about how to access government services
  – Can be modelled on Sri Lanka’s Government Information Center