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and

**NASSCOM**<sup>®</sup>

Roundtable on  
Role of IT in Rural Development



May 8, 2012, New Delhi

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Knowledge Partners

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## **AGENDA**

Rural Marketing Association of India and NASSCOM are jointly organizing a roundtable on 'Role of ICT in Rural Development' with Digital Empowerment Foundation and NASSCOM Foundation as Knowledge Partners. This roundtable is sponsored by SREI Sahaj E-Village Ltd.

### **BACKGROUND THEME**

The broad theme of the roundtable is "how ICT and digital tools could be used in making the country equitable. Rural India has more than 60-70 percent of the population and there is always a constant aspiration for the rural population to migrate in search of jobs to towns, cities and metros. It is believed that use of ICT tools and by creating Information Infrastructure; the development could reach the rural India. This roundtable would like to pick the brains of the best of multi-stakeholders community and find a way to work collectively where the rural development could be achieved through digital inclusion across governance, business, education, health and social sector.

### **DISCUSSION POINTS & TIMINGS**

3:00 pm to 3:30 pm – Networking Tea

3:30 pm to 5:30 pm – Roundtable Discussion

Opening remarks - Pradeep Kashyap, President, Rural Marketing Association of India  
Setting the Stage – Som Mittal, President, NASSCOM

<b><u>S/No.</u></b>	<b><u>Theme</u></b>	<b><u>Key Speaker</u></b>	<b><u>Moderator</u></b>
1.	ICT Solutions for Rural India	Osama Manzar, Founder Digital Empowerment Foundation	Pradeep Kashyap
2.	Impediments to ICT Scale/Replication	Rita Soni, CEO NASSCOM Foundation	
3.	Role of Stakeholders to overcome Impediments	Sanjay Kumar Panigrahi, CEO – SREI Sahaj E-Village Limited	

Summary and next steps –Som Mittal & Pradeep Kashyap

### **OUTCOME**

- Policy Suggestions
- Working Models
- Caselets
- White Paper

### **Venue & Time**

8th of May, 2012, Conference room No. 2, India International Centre

03:00 PM to 05:30 PM

Roundtable on  
**Role of IT in Rural development**

**MINUTES**

60-70% population of India lives in rural areas. As there is lack of facilities and opportunities in rural India, there is always a constant aspiration for the rural population to migrate in search of jobs to towns, cities or metros. With the development and innovation in IT industries, it is believed that the development can easily reach the rural India with the use of ICT and creation of information infrastructure,.

In order to understand the opportunities and challenges in creating the rural development through digital inclusion across governance, business, education, health and social sector, a roundtable was organized by RMAI (Rural Marketing Association of India) at India Information Centre on 08.May.2012.

The roundtable was organized in association with Digital Empowerment Foundation and NASSCOM Foundation as knowledge partners and the sponsor SREI Sahaj E-village Ltd.

**Development and Rural India: Present day scenario**

The president of RMAI, Mr. Pradeep Kashyap in his welcome note presented an overall scenario of rural development in our country. Stating the words of Mahatma Gandhi that "India lives in its villages", he said that this was true in his times. But in present times, the villagers now live on the periphery of urban development as most of the development is focused on urban rather than rural.

He pointed out that ten years back we did not talk about developing our villages so rapidly. We have 6, 40,000 villages, maximum for any country in the world. And to provide them connectivity, roads, electricity, hospitals, schools, public health centres, and other facilities is a huge challenge for India. But what is changing and will change is technology. The reason for the same is that we now don't have to talk much about physical infrastructure and we can talk about IT infrastructure, which can be a game changer. This technology can be used for variety of purposes starting from health care, education, agricultural communication to e-commerce etc. It is only a question of our imagination. Inclusive growth can now become possible because of technology.

Taking his views forward Mr. Som Mittal. President NASSCOM Foundation said that for the development of the country we need to listen to the ground realities and how we can help. Creating infrastructure in India is not a big issue, however the management of the same is. And as any time to begin is good, THIS is the right time to start.

He said that in a rapid span of time, we have seen India getting access to T.Vs. and now mobile phones. In last 3-4 years changes have been happening at even faster pace. 2, 50,000 villages have been connected with broadband and money has already been there to enable this connectivity. He told that for every call we make, a small percentage of the call charge goes to a fund which is used in the development of the villages.

He further elaborated that for the IT to succeed the very important part is connectivity. And the world has already made a lot of investment to eliminate the complexity of technology. So it is a good defining moment.

**Rural India: An opportunity**

Explaining the importance of rural India, Mr. Mittal said that rural is not only a market, it is an opportunity. And CSR can play an important role in it. He emphasized that CSR should go beyond its limits to get the work done. 30% of work is already being done by the government and 70% we will have to tap. We will have to work collectively to find the solutions.

**Impediments to ICT scale**

Focusing on the challenges related to use and management of ICT in rural development Mr. Osama Manzar, Founder, Digital Empowerment Foundation explained that the basic characteristic of the rural population is that they communicate orally. Elaborating his point of view he explained about oral mediums like radio, cinema, TV,

computer, mobile, SMS (as a literacy tool), youtube and facebook (as an audio-visual medium), and their effectiveness as a medium to disseminate information among people in the villages.

Talking about the penetration of technology, he said that, in rural we have 800 million mobile penetration, 180 million TV, 120 million radio and 100 million internet penetration (among them approx 50k use internet once or twice in a year). 60-70% people use internet on their mobiles. Community radio and information kiosks are emerging as new technologies and modes of communication in the rural areas .

He said that according to a characteristics- based analysis there are about 2, 50,000 panchayats covering 6,35,000 villages. 99% of them have no connectivity and they are not ICT literate. Though government provides funds to train 200,000 panchayats every year, but these funds are not being utilised properly. There are 1.3 million schools in our country and more than 95% are off the information highway.

Apart from this there are approximately 26.1 million MSMEs, mostly working with communities of artisans, weavers, workers and women etc., serving the community at the bottom of pyramid. This sector is again digitally neglected. We have around 3.3 million NGOs in our country and 70% of them are absent from the digital map. Hence they are not able to take any advantage of the information highway.

Another area of concern is the content which we provide to these people. So we really need to identify the content which relates to the daily life of the people we are communicating with.

One of the issues that he highlighted was that there is no single window wherein we can provide access to all the governments' schemes at one place. Attempts to create content in local languages still needs to be done.

### **Solutions:**

Talking about overcoming the barriers Ms. Rita Soni, CEO, NASSCOM Foundation said that what is required is an understanding of the market. We really need to understand the needs of people and what they actually want.

Adding to her points, Mr. Raj Kumar Jha, VP, RMAI said that we should understand the need of people first and then should accordingly create content. We cannot artificially create need and then make people buy anything especially the things that they don't want. We will have to create the content according to people's needs and wants.

Talking about the services available in the villages, Mr. Sanjay Panigrahi, CEO- SREI Sahaj said that rural centric IT content is available at 28,000 Sahaj centres across 6 states,. He said that rural is the most emerging market and this is the right time when ICT can play a big role in the development of rural and that in rural India lies a deep pocket of huge demand.

He said, "We should offer services with trust". He highlighted that we need to provide services in such a way that people feel that we are not going to cheat them.

Mr. Som Mittal expressed that the best thing for us to overcome these hurdles is to go with the flow. He said that we will have to take small steps to overcome these challenges and that we cannot wait to change the mindset of our government. He expressed the need to create visibility around ground realities and sensitizing the problems to the government.

This 2 hour conference proved to be a fruitful learning experience for all the participants. At the end Mr. Pradeep Kashyap appreciated and thanked the presence of all the speakers, participants and sponsors.

Inputs by : **Sakshi Sharma**  
**Ogilvy**