



## AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH AKSHAYS PROJECT- PERSPECTIVE OF ENTREPRENEURS OF AKSHAYS CENTERS IN TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT

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### Abstract

AKSHAYS is conceived to be one of the dream projects of government of Kerala (as part of IT mission) which aims at bringing the benefits of information and communication technology services to the grass root level of the state. AKSHAYS deals with multidisciplinary system such as ICT empowerment, entrepreneurial development, infrastructure development, women empowerment, delivering e- governance service etc. The study conducted on “social transformation through AKSHAYS project in Trivandrum district” focused on studying whether the government objective through implementing such a project was achieved or not and what extend it was achieved. This intends to find out the hindrances prevailing in implementing the original AKSHAYS project without any deviation in its concepts and purpose in Trivandrum district. The study also emphasized to analyses the benefits of AKSHAYS project to entrepreneurs. The analysis was then specifically divided into benefits to rural as well as urban entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** ICT Empowerment, Entrepreneurial Development, E-Governance, Public Private Partnership, Digitization.

### Introduction

The AKSHAYS project was initiated by Government of Kerala to bridge the digital gap between the information have's and information have note's. The project was implemented in the year 2002 at Malappuram district, Kerala and was gradually scattered to the entire state. Working on a public private partnership mode, the focus of AKSHAYS is for making technology and E-Governance service accessible to common men. The AKSHAYS project is conceived as a two phase e-literacy program that can change the culture and way of life of keralites. As an initiative of Kerala government for the development of IT infrastructure in the state and to use the immense possibility of IT to meet the needs of common people in their daily life and to convert kerala into foremost knowledgeable society of the world, it is a revolutionary in content and consequences expected.

### Review of Literature

**Khalid said Rabayah**(2009)conducted a study on “*Economic and social Empowerment of women through information and communication technology- special reference to Palestine*” which were published by ICT 4D R&D centre, Arab American University. This paper presents an insight into an initiative that intends to empower women through ICT, by means of a joint venture between NGO and local women organization. The paper reflects on direct and indirect impact of the initiative that targeted hundreds of women in Palestinian rural areas. The initiative exerted considerable efforts to enhance ICT technical capabilities of women, develop their entrepreneurial capabilities and in other ways promote social and economic empowerment.

**Dr. Yakoob and Nissar P** (2014) conducted a study on “*awareness of e-governance services provided through AKSHAYS centers in Kerala with special reference to Malappuram district*” published in August 2014 by Abhinav publication's. The main objective of the study was (a) to understand awareness of e-governance services provided through AKSHAYS Centre in Kerala (b) to analyze usage of e-governance services provided through AKSHAYS Centre in Kerala (c) to study on perception of users on effectiveness of cost and time of service delivery. They find that AKSHAYS has been trying to make government services more accessible to villagers, which attempts to reduce the time and money people spend, trying to communicate with public officials and to provide immediate, transparent access to local government data and documentation. Radical changes may fall as they are difficult to implement and may lead to lot of resistance.

**Kerala State IT Mission** (2014) conducted a study on “*AKSHAYS an overview*”. The objective of this study was to make an analysis about the objectives behind the formation of AKSHAYS project and the achievements derived from implementing such a project. The major objectives of Gov. behind the formation of AKSHAYS is (1)to create ubiquitous network CSCs (2)to implement a sustainable model for self generation of income (3)to provide necessary assistance to sustain the network including financial, organizational and policy support and (4)to generate G2Cservice for delivery to the citizens using the AKSHAYS network. The study finds that many achievements have derived from AKSHAYS project implementation such as (1) entering into new array of services like banking and insurance (2) over 650 AKSHAYS entrepreneurs have become IRDA Agents (3) set up around 340 numbers of banking kiosk across the state (4) more than 60 lakhs applications submitted under



e-district 5) over 1.6 crores citizens enrolled under UID through AKSHAYS centers (6) RSBY health insurance policy for 2 crore population (7) monthly income of AKSHAYS entrepreneurs from G2C services is increased from 15 lakhs to 3 crores (8) create employment to 2000 personnel (9) members of labor welfare board reached up to 18 lakhs (10) AKSHAYS launches Adhar based payments for the first time in Kerala etc. according to them AKSHAYS project done wonders in the social and economic empowerment people and it have done significant role in reducing the gap between information have's and information have not's.

### Statement of Problem

The project is considered to be a bold initiative of Kerala government and have a definite mission and vision. But there is some problems exist in the operational mechanism of AKSHAYS. And so the mission of AKSHAYS is not fruitfully achieved yet. Some of the services like E-Vidya, etc. are not reached to the targeted public. And so the actual performance of AKSHAYS in terms of providing service has not reached to the expected level due to lack of proper direction from the part of Government or due to lack of awareness to the public regarding such facility.

Apart from providing e-governance service to public, another objective behind the formation of AKSHAYS project is to promote entrepreneurship and create employability of unemployed youth in the state. In this context there is a need to study whether these objectives are achieved at the expected level or not. Problems also found in the long term survival of e-centers especially in Trivandrum district. Some of the centers started earlier were closed up recently due to the mismatch between the cost and benefit derived from the project by the Kiosk owners.

### Objectives of the Study

- To explore the effectiveness of AKSHAYS project in bringing the benefits of ICT to the grass root level.

### Methodology

The study has been conducted by using both primary and secondary source of data. Primary data have been collected from a sample of 10 entrepreneurs of AKSHAYS in Trivandrum district. The study was started with a survey of 10 AKSHAYS centers in Trivandrum district. Specifically say, 5 AKSHAYS centers selected from rural area and 5 AKSHAYS centers were selected from urban area. A structured interview schedule has been prepared and administered on then. In addition to this a personal interview has been conducted with the district project director of AKSHAYS and with Assistant project coordinator at district project office, Trivandrum.

Secondary sources like books, newspaper and related sites are intensively used to build the theory and prepare the interview schedule. For presenting the collected data tabular statement, chart, diagram, Garrett's ranking method and percentage are used.

**Current Status of AKSHAYS centers in Trivandrum district**

Indicators	2010	2016
Number of AKSHAYS centers originally set up	298	307
Number of working AKSHAYS centers	131	264
Number of AKSHAYS center per panchayat	3	3
Number of AKSHAYS located at corporation area	14	20
Number of AKSHAYS per municipality	3	7
Number of help desk	0	5
Number of house held per centre	21602	26471
Number of PC literate through AKSHAYS	4	0
Number of women AKSHAYS entrepreneurs	105	120
Number of SC/ST entrepreneurs	17	20

Source of data: primary data from AKSHAYS district office, Trivandrum



Perspective of Entrepreneurs of Akshaya

Table 1: Infrastructural facility

	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Initial period (no :)	At present (no :)	Increase/ Decrease (%)	Initial period (no :)	At present (no :)	Increase/ Decrease (%)	Initial period (no :)	At present (no :)	Increase/ Decrease (%)
Computer	18	25	39	19	43	126	37	68	84
Printer	10	13	30	7	17	142	17	30	76
Scanner	8	11	38	6	17	183	14	28	100
Photostat machine	5	6	20	6	15	150	11	21	91
Multimedia equipment	7	5	29	13	33	154	20	38	90
CD writer	14	21	50	14	39	179	28	60	114
Web Cam	6	16	167	8	24	200	14	40	186
Lamination equipment	2	2	0	3	5	67	5	7	40
Internet accessibility	5	5	0	5	5	0	10	10	0
Trained assistants	14	14	0	9	19	111	23	33	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>87</b>

Source: primary data

Table 1 shows when we compare the current status based on the initial period, over all 87% progression has been take place in case of infrastructure. When we look on specifically only 33% progression has been take place in rural area and 141% progression has been take place in urban area. When we look on each parameters of infrastructure in the whole respondent, 84% increase has been take place in case of number of computers, 76% increase has been take place in case of number of printers, 100% increase take place in case of scanner, 91% progression reported by number of Photostat machine, 90% increase contributed by multimedia equipment, 114% increase take place in CD writer, web cam facility increased by 186%, lamination equipment increased by 40% and the trained assistance have been increased by 43%.

Table 2: Training received from Gov. / Local Panchayat / Private institutions/ NGO

Training	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Initial period (%)	At Present (%)	+ / -	Initial period (%)	At Present (%)	+ / -	Initial Period %	At Present (%)	+ / -
Hardware	60	80	20	40	80	40	50	80	30
Software	80	100	20	40	80	40	60	90	30
Entrepreneurship skill development	80	80	0	80	60	-20	80	70	-10
Free Software	80	80	0	40	60	20	60	70	10
Advanced level software	60	60	0	20	20	0	40	60	20
Upcoming ICT technologies	80	60	-20	60	80	20	70	50	-20
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>16</b>

Source: primary data



Table 2 shows that only 17% increase has been take place in case of training received by total entrepreneurs at present when compared to initial period. When we look on specifically 36% has been take place in urban area and it is only 5% in rural area. Majority (60%) increase has been reported in hardware training. 50% increase take place in software training received by entrepreneurs. But the noticeable thing is that 29% decrease has been takes place in training about upcoming ICT technologies which is an important one in case of Akshaya. 13% decrease also reported in case of entrepreneurship skill development.

**Table 3 : Level of satisfaction in various factors**

Different parties	Rural (%)						Urban (%)						Total (%)					
	1	2	3	4	5	Total	1	2	3	4	5	Total	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Public participation	40	40	20	0	0	100	40	60	0	0	0	100	40	50	10	0	0	100
Monitoring mechanism	20	60	0	20	0	100	80	20	0	0	0	100	50	40	0	10	0	100
Business opportunities	20	80	0	0	0	100	40	60	0	0	0	100	30	70	0	0	0	100
Competition among units	80	20	0	0	0	100	80	20	0	0	0	100	80	20	0	0	0	100
Competition from private institutions	40	40	20	0	0	100	40	60	0	0	0	100	40	50	10	0	0	100
Financial gain	20	0	0	80	0	100	40	20	0	40	0	100	30	10	0	60	0	100
Privacy and security concern	60	40	0	0	0	100	20	80	0	0	0	100	40	60	0	0	0	100
Political involvement	0	20	0	60	20	100	20	80	0	0	0	100	40	60	0	0	0	100

Source : primary data

Table 3 shows that 50% of the total respondents are satisfied on the public participation, 40% are highly satisfied and remaining. Specifically say 40% of the rural population is highly satisfied, 40% are just satisfied and remaining 20% are neutral in giving an answer for this. In case of urban respondents, 60% are just satisfied and 40% are highly satisfied on the public participation.

In case of monitoring mechanism, 50% of the total respondents are highly satisfied, 40% are just satisfied and remaining 10% are dissatisfied in this regard. When we look on specifically 60% of the rural respondents are satisfied on the monitoring mechanism of govt, 20% highly satisfied and remaining 20% are dissatisfied in this regard. 80% of the urban respondents are highly satisfied on the monitoring mechanism and remaining 20% are just satisfied on that.

70% of the respondents are satisfied on the business opportunities and remaining 30% are highly satisfying on that. Specifically say that 80% of rural respondents are satisfied and remaining 20% are highly satisfied. 60% of the respondents are satisfied on the business opportunities and 40% are highly satisfied on that.

In case of support provided by AKSHAYS officials, 60% of the total population is satisfied and 40% are highly satisfied on that. Specifically say 60% of rural respondents are satisfied and 40% are highly satisfied. 60% of the urban respondents are satisfied and remaining 40% are highly satisfied in this regard.

In case of competition among AKSHAYS centers, 80% of the total respondents are highly satisfied and 20% just satisfying on that. Same figures are observed in case of rural as well as urban area.

In case of competition from other institutions like internet cafe, 50% of the total population is highly satisfied, 40% are highly satisfied and remaining 10% are neutral in giving a proper answer in this regard. Specifically say, 40% of the rural respondents are highly satisfied, 40% are satisfied and remaining 20% are neutral in giving an answer to the question. In case of urban respondents, 40% are highly satisfied and 60% are just satisfied on the competition from others institutions.



60% of the total respondents are dissatisfied on the financial gain they are getting from AKSHAYS centers . But 30% are highly satisfied on the gain and 10% are just satisfying on that. Specifically say, 80% of the rural respondents are dissatisfied on the financial gain and remaining 20% are highly satisfied in this regard. In case of urban respondents 40% are highly satisfied, 40% are dissatisfied and remaining 20% are highly dissatisfied on that.

In case of Privacy and security concern 60% of the total population are satisfied and remaining 40% are highly satisfied on that.60% of the total population is dissatisfied on political involvement, 30% are satisfied.

**Table 4: Functional and operational flexibility**

Variables	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Highly flexible	4	80	0	0	4	40
Flexible	1	20	5	100	6	60
Neither flexible nor inflexible	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inflexible	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rigid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	5	100	5	100	10	100

Source: primary data

Table 4 shows that 60% of the total respondents are agreeing that functioning of AKSHAYS is flexible and remaining 40% are agreeing that it is highly flexible. When we look on specifically 80% of the respondents are agreeing that functioning of AKSHAYS centre is highly flexible and remaining 20% merely agreeing on that. In case of urban entrepreneurs 100% are in the opinion that it is flexible.

### Findings

The survey result shows that the advertisement in the newspaper about the AKSHAYS project was the prevalent source of information among the rural as well as urban entrepreneurs. The overall infrastructural facility in terms of availability of technical equipment and trained staff for the smooth functioning of AKSHAYS centers have increased in case of all centers when compared to their initial setup. But the rate of increase is only 33% in case of rural area whereas it is 141% in case of urban centers. This may be due to low level of profit and demand for such service in rural area. Most of the entrepreneurs are not getting proper training for doing the operational activities. They are privately going for teaching all those things because of lack of technical support from higher authorities. Also most of the entrepreneurs including urban and rural entrepreneurs are dissatisfied about the motivation and moral support from local Panchayath or Corporation and from AKSHAYS program office. And majority of the AKSHAYS centers wish to diversify with more value added IT services and non IT services.

### Conclusion

While studying the effectiveness of AKSHAYS project in Trivandrum district, it is ascertained that from the point of view of entrepreneurs, there is a lack of Government support in terms of technical as well as financial assistance. The centers are operating exactly as a private business organization. Due to this reason the motto of AKSHAYS centers as a social entrepreneurship model slightly is deviating and most of the centers charging high fees from customers for making profit. One important thing I should notice is that the first phase of AKSHAYS is not implemented in Trivandrum district which include providing e-literacy and e-vidya etc. due to lack of co-operation from the part of public. The only service here provided through AKSHAYS is e-governance service and so almost all AKSHAYS centers running with loss. The study finds out that there is a need for Government support in terms of providing grants for establishing some value added services and also need technical assistance so that AKSHAYS centers can operate profitably. The study also suggest for the establishment of a new wing for monitoring the performance of AKSHAYS frequently as well as recruiting skilled and trained manpower for AKSHAYS centers .

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