

A study entitled **“Access and Use of ICTs by rural youth: A Case Study of NGO supported initiative Wireless for Community (W4C)”** was done by one of the interns from Digital Empowerment Foundation for her final dissertation for **University of Delhi**. The dissertation aimed at studying the impact of various ICTs by rural youth in Baran district of Rajasthan. Digital Empowerment Foundation and the Internet Society (ISOC) through their Wireless for Communities (W4C) project had provided technical support and set up centres to promote the use of ICTs by local communities in the various education centres of the district.

The study was carried out in Baran District of Rajasthan, in two villages, Bhanwargarh and Mamoni from among the eight cluster centres provided with Wi-Fi based equipment and other technologies.

Research was done on rural youth who had received and those who were receiving computer literacy trainings in the two selected villages. In total sixty (60) respondents were selected, with equal number of boys and girls (30 girls and 30 boys). Assistance from the NGO functionaries helped in identifying the two villages with the largest centers with Wi-Fi based equipment and technological support from the NGO. In – depth interactions were conducted with the respondents, followed by home visits to have a closer idea of lifestyle of respondents in a better way.

The research suggested that even though ICTs are recognized as a catalyst for development but in reality a deep digital divide across urban and rural regions exists. Especially tribal areas are cut off and deprived from these catalysts for development. Government systems though well intended are not able to reach to the people living in the core rural areas. Government agencies are not able to meet the specific needs and requirements of the rural areas and therefore their well-intended programs are not necessarily accessible by them.

Although, NGOs have the flexibility to reach and understand such community specific needs but not much happens on ground. The project jointly initiated by Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) and Internet Society (ISOC) ‘Wireless for Communities’(W4C) helps in providing a holistic, community-empowered approach by connecting rural communities to the world wide web through the Internet. In Baran district the organizations has played a great role in addressing to the unfelt need

of the community. By giving technological support packed with proper attention and trainings for the trainers, twofold motivation strategy, firstly, to totally democratize the availability of connectivity and enable access to information at the will of citizens outside urban centres – and remote rural areas in particular; secondly, to address the lack of content, product and services originating from rural areas which affects the economy from percolating to the bottom of the pyramid.

This research helped in understanding the impact of ICTs on the socio-economic aspects in the lives of the rural youths. It was found that the most popular ICTs tool in the two villages of Baran, was mobile phone. It was also found that there was gender differential in access and use of the ICTs, bearing a direct impact on their future prospects. However, easy accessibility and availability of ICTs has helped in the overall social upliftment of youth in the rural communities of Baran. But for more deeper impact and sustained model of growth it is important to address these challenges in future programme planning.