

Role of Digital India in Achieving Sustainable Development

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Abstract- India is one of the populous democratic countries in the world and is a developing Country in terms of Economic Growth, Rapid Urbanization, Advancing itself in Defense and other Modern Technologies, etc. To support this Developing Country, 'Digital India Programme' is a Visionary Programme launched in 2015 by Government of India to transform India into a digitally Empowered Society. The main motto of the 'Digital India Programme' is to connect all the rural areas in India with Digital Networks thereby enhancing transparency in Governance. Totally, there are 107 Initiatives under this program that is helping India to transform to a Digital Country and many of the Initiatives are in the verge of completion. At this stage of COVID 19 Pandemic, this program is supporting Indian Government to reach citizens with ease thereby helping citizens to get benefits directly. Primarily, Digital India Program established the required 'Digital Infrastructure' to provide Digital Empowerment and required Services to Citizens and today, in this period of COVID 19 Pandemic; the established robust Digital Infrastructure is supporting several crores of citizens across India. With Digital India Initiative supporting Indian Government to reach the Citizens with ease, this paper focuses on highlighting the role of Digital India Program in Achieving Sustainable Development of India.

Keywords: Digital India, Digital Infrastructure, Sustainable Development

I. INTRODUCTION

To facilitate Government Services, reach common man without any hassle, Government of India introduced the 'Digital India' Program' (Digital India, n.d.). The focus of this program is to build the required Digital Infrastructure across India so that Government's benefits to the Citizen can be done electronically. In this regard, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has improved online Infrastructure of India drastically by increasing Internet connectivity. The Digital India Program was launched on 1 July 2015 and is facilitating other visionary Initiatives of Government of India like Bharat Net, Make in India, Startup India and Standup India, Industrial Corridors, Bharatmala, Sagarmala, etc., It is one of the programs initiated to achieve Sustainable Development of India. Some of the Notable Digital India initiatives include Implementation of Aadhaar Digital Biometric Identity Cards, National Mission on Education using ICT, PAHAL (DBTL) to eradicate bogus LPG Connections, Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan to enhance digital literacy in rural areas, Smart Cities, etc., In total, 107 Initiatives are initiated to empower India digitally, thereby achieving Sustainable Development [1-4].

II. DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAM – A SNAPSHOT

Digital India Program is implemented through three broad areas as shown below. Digital Infrastructure having 29 Initiatives is the primary pillar that ensures the required Digital Infrastructure is kept ready for carrying out Digital Services and Empowering Citizens Digitally as shown in fig.1. The other two pillars include Digital Services and Digital Empowerment having 62 and 16 Initiatives respectively [5-9].

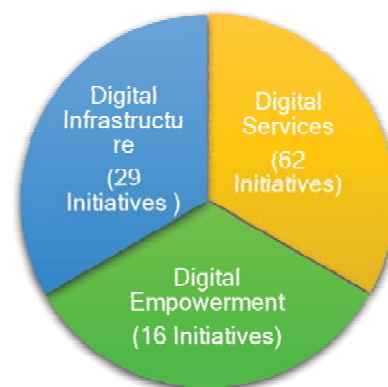


Fig. 1 Digital India - Conceptual View

- (a) **Digital Infrastructure** is the pre-requisite for enabling Digital way of working. Under this Pillar, 29 Initiatives are functioning to create the Digital Platform for India. Some of the notable and successful Digital Infrastructure Initiatives include Aadhaar to provide unique identity card to every Indian Citizen, Deen Dhayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana to provide continuous power supply to rural India, Digilocker to empower citizens digitally, Integrated Health Information Platform to create Electronic Health records of Citizens, Open Data to publish datasets for public use, Direct Benefit Transfer to facilitate delivery of government welfare schemes, E-Trade, etc.,
- (b) The basic purpose of Government of India to initiate the Digital India Program is to provide the **Government Services to Citizens** with ease. In order to ensure this objective is met, 62 Initiatives are functioning under Digital Services Initiatives. Some of the notable initiatives in this category include Accessible India Campaign to support specially challenged people to get equal opportunity, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao to support girl child education, Crop Insurance Mobile App to support farmers, e-Granthalaya supporting digital library, Startup India, Swatch Bharat, Farmer Portal,

Goods & Service Tax Network, Himmat to support women during emergency, etc.

- (c) **Empowering Citizens digitally** is yet another key aspect of Digital India Program. To achieve this objective, 16 Initiatives are functioning and some of the notable and successful Digital Empowerment Initiatives include Aadhaar Enabled Payment System, MyGov to promote participation of common citizen in governance, PAHAL to eliminate duplicate LPG Connections, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana to promote Skill Development, Smart Cities to promote sustainable and inclusive cities, Visvesvaraya PhD Scheme for Electronics and IT to encourage working professionals to pursue PhD, etc.,

III. ROLE OF DIGITAL INDIA IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable Development aims at protecting the planet, end poverty and make this earth a pleasant place to live peacefully and prosperously. All the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of United Nations aims at sustainable development socially, economically and environmentally (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.). The 17 SDGs are integrated in such a way that the overall development is balanced. NITI Aayog of India has mapped the various initiatives of Digital India Program to achieve the various Sustainable Development Goals (NITI Aayog, August, 2018) as explained below Table 1.

Table 1: Sustainable Development Goals (NITI Aayog, August, 2018)

S.No	Sustainable Development Goal	Digital India Initiative	Role of Digital India Program in Achieving Sustainable Development
1.	No Poverty	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana	This DI Initiative focuses on developing Skill of citizens, thereby eradicating Poverty
2.	Zero Hunger	Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana	This DI Initiative aims at financial inclusion and directing the Government benefits to the needy, thereby removing hunger
3.	Good Health and Well being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIKSHAY • Targeted Public Distribution System • Mother & Child tracking system 	These Initiatives are intended to distribute quality food grains to poorer and improve their health and well being
4.	Quality Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Scholarship Portal • National mission on education using ICT, E-GRANTHALAYA, SWAYAM • Visvesvaraya PhD scheme 	These Initiatives intend to benefit learners and improve their quality of education
5.	Gender Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beti Bachao Beti Padhao • HIMMAT 	Initiatives focusing on Womens
6.	Clean Water and Sanitation	Swach Bhaarat App	Initiatives to make Clean and Green India
7.	Affordable and Clean Energy	National Ujala Dashboard	Initiatives aimed at Efficient management of Energy
8.	Decent Work and Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Career Service portal • Crop Insurance mobile app 	Initiatives helping Job Seekers
9.	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCA21 • Aadhaar Enabled Payment System • PayGov, BHIM • Passport Seva project • DIGILOCKER 	Initiatives aiming to promote Industrial Growth and providing required Infrastructure to Citizens

S.No	Sustainable Development Goal	Digital India Initiative	Role of Digital India Program in Achieving Sustainable Development
10.	Reduced Inequalities	Accessible India campaign and mobile app	Initiatives to help specially Challenged Citizens
11.	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Smart Cities	This Initiative focuses on developing Sustainable and Inclusive Cities
12.	Responsible Consumption and Production	PAHAL (DBTL)	This initiative aims to eliminate bogus LPG Connection such that the needy consumers will get the benefits
13.	Climate Action	UJJWALA	The goal aims to adapt to the climate change and invest in low-carbon development
14.	Life Below Water	ESSO - Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services	This aims to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems from pollution, as well as address the impacts of ocean acidification.
15.	Life on Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) • ICDS Systems Strengthening and Nutrition Improvement Project • Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium • Farmer Portal 	This aims to reduce the loss of natural habitats and biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation and support global food and water security.
16.	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Crime and Criminal tracking network & systems	Initiatives under Peace
17.	Partnership for the Goals	EGREETINGS	Initiatives to promote partnerships

IV. CONCLUSION

With Google announcing to invest Rs. 75000 Crores into Digital India Program for the next 5-7 years, Digital Economy in India is not a vision but a reality (Financial Express, July 14, 2020) We believe that the Digital India initiative not only brings transparency in Governance and help the needy at the right time, it also helps in boosting nation's economy and provide large number of employment prospects to the youth. The mapping of the Digital India Initiatives to 17 SDG's by NITI Aayog helps India to achieve Sustainable Development at a much faster rate. Some of the Initiatives require some transformational process, reengineering, refinement and adjustment to the existing process and practices to achieve the desired objectives. These objectives can take jet speed with the participation of Indian Citizens and other stake holders of our nation to create a sustainable future. There are still concerns on Data Security and Privacy and necessary steps are taken to ensure these concerns are resolved (Business

Line, July 14, 2020). In Conclusion, Digital India is having a great impact on the future of Indian citizens and Economy of our nation. So, let's join our hands and move forward for the brighter and prosperous India.

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