

Simple ICT solutions for livelihood



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‘Akashganga’ (meaning ‘The Milky Way’) project was conceptualised more than six years ago, when IT awareness in the country was limited to big urban centres only. The fact that

illiterate and semi-literate farmers accepted the system and are operating it confidently, is an achievement by itself. For the past several years, computers are being used for a very basic activity like collection of milk and rural masses are comfortable with it and have reposed their confidence in it.

Local entrepreneurs could spot the latent potential and have spread the system in the remote areas, through diligent work and timely support. They kept their system, without any monetary compensation for weeks together, for the Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCS) to try out and feel comfortable with the systems. The benefits in a nutshell are:

- Speedier collection of milk and timely disbursement of payment;
- Lower prevalence of corrupt practices;
- Regular and timely maintenance of DCS accounts.

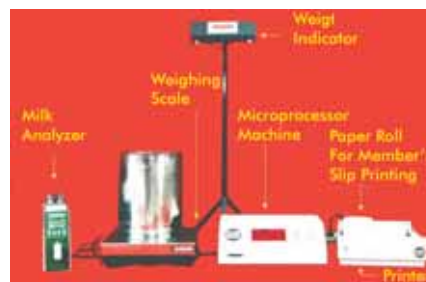
Project description

After studying in detail the various functional aspects of village milk co-operative societies, ‘Akashganga’ (www.akashganga.co.in) had developed two unique systems to automate all the milk procurement operations of village milk collection centre. ‘Akashganga’ is being used at the DCS, which is a farmer-owned, grass-root level unit in the cooperative structure. All the farmer (members) of the DCS congregate twice a day at its premises

to sell milk. The simple technology used in this product has enabled the timely collection of milk and thus, generated higher profits for the producer, now paid well on time. A basic milk collection transaction done by ‘Akashganga’ comprises: (i) measuring weight of milk with Electronic Weighing Scale, (ii) fat testing using Milko Tester, (iii) capture of unique member ID by the PC software, (iv) printing of pay slip, with all this data and the amount to be paid.

ICT intervention

‘Akashganga’ has been implemented at more than 1000 locations. At each and every location, it is being used 365 days in a year,



Microprocessor based Automatic Milk Collection System

and for more than 6 hours in a day. What started out as a project is now a full-fledged product, with after sales services and so on.

Information technology used in ‘Akashganga’ is not the modern web-enabled technology but a simple DOS-based system. It comprises of computer hardware, software and milk testing and interfacing equipment. The interface equipment is a microprocessor based electronic unit, and the milk testing equipment consists of an electronic weighing machine and a fat testing machine. The electronic interface allows the data about the milk to be transmitted to the PC. The data, which is transmitted, is also displayed on the display board, connected to the milk testing equipment. The complete interface

mechanism of electronic unit with the PC is innovative and, at the same time, cost effective and offers transparency of operations. Till date project benefits approximately 1.5 million farmers daily.

Lessons learned

- **People’s attitude:** People generally do not accept anything new until the total benefit is proven to them.
- **Cost of the system:** Although ‘Akashganga’ is priced competitively, the cost is a major impediment for the DCS, for whom every rupee has to be accounted for.
- **Environment (physical):** For IT based systems to operate, the machines have to be really rugged and withstand all the climatic conditions.
- **Lack of adequate power protection equipment:** Power situation in the villages is poor. At times, during power cut, manual entry has to be resorted to, leading to major disruption of normal routines.

Akashganga’s achievements so far

- Designated Best Practice by UNDP India and Good practice by UNHABITAT.
- Invited by ICT4D Platform a major event WSIS to showcase its work at Exhibition.
- Qualified Finalist for Development Marketplace Award 2003
- Shortlisted by Digital Dividend for its contribution in bridging the digital divide
- Qualified for the final round at the Stockholm Challenge Awards 2002 & 2003 ■

Akashganga is the recipient of Manthan Award 2005 in e-business category for best e-content.