



Introduction to the Namma Mahiti Kendras of IT for Change

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Since 2006, the field centre of IT for Change, *Prakriye*, has been engaged in building an ICT-enabled community information centre model. The key objective of this is to create a space that can bring local governance institutions closer to women, and particularly, enable marginalised women to seek their entitlements. The information centres – called *Namma Mahiti Kendras* (meaning, Our Information Centres, in Kannada, the local language) – are situated in two blocks of Mysore district – Hunsur and H.D.Kote. This work initially received support from the United Nations Development Programme and International Development Research Centre, Canada. From January 2012 onwards, new centres have been established with support from the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality and the National Mission for Empowerment of Women.

Prakriye's Namma Mahiti Kendras are slowly growing into a network of women-run information centres, which effectively utilises digital technologies for public information outreach, service delivery, and shaping a women's rights discourse in relation to local governance and democracy, at the community level.

In specific, the following strategies have been adopted by *Prakriye* for creating a bottom-up, networked, information and communication ecology that is centred around the needs and concerns of marginalised women:

a. Building a critical mass of women-run community information centres

At present, *Prakriye* has 3 cluster-level centres, in the villages of Attiguppe (Mullur *Gram Panchayat*), Hosavaranchi (Uygodanahalli *Gram Panchayat*) and Bharatwadi (Doddahejjuru *Gram Panchayat*) in Hunsur block. Catering to 5 to 10 villages, each centre is run by a Managing Committee comprising of representatives from women's collectives (*sanghas*) in these villages. A young woman information intermediary, *sakhi* (meaning friend), trained by the *sangha* women and the *Prakriye* team, runs the everyday affairs of the centre. The *sakhi* addresses the information needs of the village community, while focusing mainly on women's participation, and interfaces continuously with local institutions - government departments at the block level and the *Gram Panchayat*.

b. Ensuring visibility for women's *sanghas* at the block level

To facilitate smooth interface with block level departments, a block centre that connects cluster level centres with government offices at the block has been set up in Hunsur and H.D.Kote blocks. These centres are locally known as the '*Taluk Mahiti Kendra*'.

c. Promoting digital methods as a vital bridge for women's active citizenship

The information centres at the cluster and block levels also function as a space for strengthening the learning-action processes of women's collectives. Community radio and community video are used as tools for women's citizenship education, in the following ways. Firstly, *Prakriye*, in partnership with the Karnataka State Open University, runs a community radio for *sangha* women, to claim their rightful space in the local public sphere. The broadcast, called *Kelu Sakhi* (Listen, my friend) features content sourced from the *sanghas*, in the geographies where the *Namma Mahiti Kendras* are operational. Secondly, *Prakriye* has a community video strategy that promotes women's perspectives, working closely with *sanghas* on content ideation and development. Thirdly, through a digital library strategy, video screenings, narrow casting of audio clips from '*Kelu Sakhi*', and debates on gender inequality and injustice, the *Namma Mahiti Kendra* acts as a crucial local institution for women's active citizenship.

With the support received from *Mission Poorna Shakti*, of the National Mission for Empowerment of Women, in January 2013, *Prakriye* plans to expand its existing work, in the following directions:

- Strengthening the linkages of the existing *Namma Mahiti Kendras* at Attiguppe, Hosavaranchi and Bharatwadi, with their *Gram Panchayats*.



The information intermediary at the Taluk Mahiti Kendra, H.D.Kote sharing information with a group of visiting sangha women. She also acts as a bridge between the government offices at the block level and the information centres at the cluster level.

- Strengthening the linkages between the *Namma Mahiti Kendras* and *Taluk Mahiti Kendras*.
- Setting up two new *Namma Mahiti Kendras*: One of the two new *Kendras* will be developed as a new experiment, in which the *Gram Panchayat* plays a central role in the management and operations of the centre.
- Enabling all *Namma Mahiti Kendras* to function as *Gram Sabha* resource centres that enable regular dialogue between elected representatives and women's collectives; and utilise the pedagogic possibilities of community media to help women effectively participate in local governance forums.
- Exploring mobile phone possibilities such as Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS), for sending targeted voice messages to user-groups with varied information requirements.
- Utilising Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping for promoting community-centred micro-planning processes in *Gram Panchayats* and strengthening *Panchayat* committees.
- Creating and maintaining a *Praja* (people-centred) Information System in the local language on a Wikipedia platform, that improves the informational exchange between

Panchayats and citizens and promotes a culture of social accountability. The 'Wiki' is intended as a space for *Panchayat* Development Officers to have a peer network, and for *Panchayats* to share information about their population, geographic area, jurisdiction, members, news etc. Additionally, the 'Wiki' will also carry key information about eligibility criteria and application process for various governmental schemes.

The current status of the *Namma Mahiti Kendras* and *Taluk Mahiti Kendras* is captured below.



Community radio and community video are used as tools for women's citizenship education.

Attiguppe Namma Mahiti Kendra, Mullur Gram Panchayat

♀ **Background:**

Attiguppe is a village of about 300 households in Mullur *Gram Panchayat*, Hunsur block. This village has a long history of association with the *Mahila Samakhya* programme of the Department of Education. The *Namma Mahiti Kendra* was established in 2006, by *Prakriye*, in partnership with *Mahila Samakhya* Karnataka. Though there are representatives from all women's collectives in the Managing Committee of the Attiguppe *Namma Mahiti Kendra*, *Mahila Samakhya* collectives continue to take the lead role in most of the activities, given their years of exposure to 'education for empowerment' processes.

♀ **Impact Area:**

The villages of Attiguppe, Siriyur, Hejjodlu, Lakkankoppalu, Majpeyanahalli and Mullur.

♀ **Activities:**

- ◆ One-stop shop for information about schemes of line departments and key liaison point in the cluster, for line departments at the block level and the *Taluk Mahiti Kendra*.
- ◆ Providing public information to community members, and helping them in entitlements processing.
- ◆ Outreach visits by Managing Committee members and information intermediary to all

villages in the cluster / impact area.

- ◆ Organising regular meetings between *Panchayat* Development Officer and women's collectives to strengthen women's linkages with the *Gram Panchayat*.
- ◆ Networking with health extension workers and Primary Health Centres to organise health camps and awareness programmes.
- ◆ Facilitating community audit of *anganwadi* functioning and organising community level awareness events on the importance of nutrition for reproductive and child health.
- ◆ Production of community video resources that highlight women's engagement in local governance processes and women's collective solidarity. Between January to December 2012, two films have been shot in the impact area of the *Attiguppe Namma Mahiti Kendra*:

a) on the 'Nutrition Day' programme organised at the *anganwadi* in Attiguppe.

b) on a 'Moonlight Dinner' that is routinely organised by the women's collective in this cluster, to document their collective solidarity as an inspiration to other *sanghas*.



The information intermediary of the Attiguppe Namma Mahiti Kendra on an outreach visit.

- ◆ Regular recording by the information intermediary, who doubles up as a community reporter, of audio content for '*Kelu Sakhi*'.
- ◆ Digital Library that provides narrow casting of audio content and video screenings on request, to support citizenship education processes of women's collectives.
- ◆ Organising *Kishori Sabhas* (meetings of adolescent girls) to carve out a space for their critical self-reflection and interrogation of gender norms. Such meetings are held once in 3 months, and they use video and audio resources to support discussions and dialogue.
- ◆ Participation by the information intermediary in all key local governance forums – such as *Gram Sabha*, *Ward Sabha*, and meetings of *Panchayat* committees (School Development and Management Committee and Village Health and Sanitation Committee).
- ◆ Undertaking 'quick-and-dirty' surveys to identify beneficiaries for social welfare schemes, in order to effectively help marginalised groups access entitlements and make

beneficiary selection processes (such as, for allocation of toilets under the *Nirmal Bharat* programme) open and transparent.

- ◆ Organising meetings between women's collectives and elected women representatives in all villages in the impact area, to enable the emergence of a women-centric local governance agenda. Between January to March 2013, meetings were organised in Lakkankoppalu and Siriyur, 2 villages in the cluster.
- ◆ Strengthening linkages between elected women representatives and information centre.



Additional Facilities:

- ◆ Photocopy services
- ◆ DTP services for community institutions such as school and *Panchayat*
- ◆ Computer literacy classes for school-going children in the community
- ◆ Photography services for personal and social events
- ◆ Photo documentation for local governance-related events



Key Highlights: Stories of Change

- ◆ The Managing Committee and the information intermediary are now invited by the *anganwadi* to audit its food grains distribution, every month. In fact, at present, it is the information intermediary who takes the photographs that are sent as documentary evidence to the block level departments, by the *anganwadi* workers.
- ◆ The Primary Health Centre coordinates with the *Namma Mahiti Kendra* to schedule awareness generation programmes and health camps, in the cluster.
- ◆ The *Gram Panchayat* dispatches a copy of the *Gram Sabha* and *Ward Sabha* notices to the *Namma Mahiti Kendra*. Further, the *Gram Panchayat* considers the *Mahiti Kendra* to be an impartial arbiter of public interest. For example, when the *Panchayat* faced a situation where there seemed to be many spurious claims for social security benefits such as old age and widow pensions, it asked the information centre to take up a survey in Attiguppe and the neighbouring village of Siriyur, to build the evidence to determine bonafide beneficiaries.
- ◆ There has been a maturation of the audio-based and video-based learning processes in



Preparations earlier in the day, for filming the 'Moonlight Dinner' in Lakkankoppalu, an outreach village of the Attiguppe information centre.

the environs of the Attiguppe information centre. For example, soon after they heard a radio broadcast about Independence Day celebrations, women in Attiguppe organised celebrations on the ground. Another time, the information intermediary played a video filmed by the IT for Change team on the importance of girls going to school. One of the women watching the film, recognised a girl who had dropped out of school recently, went back and spoke to the girl's father, and persuaded her to re-join school.



Future Plans:



A Managing Committee meeting in progress, at the Attiguppe Namma Mahiti Kendra.

Attiguppe who are already comfortable in handling the video-camera, will be encouraged to do a video-documentation of the proceedings of the *Mahila Gram Sabha*, which will help them in furthering their demands before the *Panchayat* body and to form networks of support in the local communities.

- ◆ Strengthening the linkages between elected women representatives and women's collectives in all the villages in the impact area of the centre, by holding a round of meetings, and utilising a video-based module on 'gender and governance' to enable women to emerge as a political constituency.
- ◆ Organising *Mahila Gram Sabhas* in Mullur *Gram Panchayat* to effectively gender the local governance agenda. Women from Attiguppe who are already comfortable in handling the video-camera, will be encouraged to do a video-documentation of the proceedings of the *Mahila Gram Sabha*, which will help them in furthering their demands before the *Panchayat* body and to form networks of support in the local communities.
- ◆ Involving the *Panchayat* Development Officer in the creation of the Wiki based *Praja* (People's) Information System that is being planned.
- ◆ Organising an Information *Mela* in Attiguppe as part of public information outreach activities of the centre. The Information *Mela*, in addition to orienting visitors to the various schemes of the government, will also build their awareness on the new possibilities of utilising the Internet for accessing public information.
- ◆ Voluntary enrollment of mobile numbers for voice-blasts through IVRS platform on information about entitlements and government schemes on agriculture, livelihoods training, pensions, etc.
- ◆ Commencement of Voice Message announcements to user groups on various state schemes and information related to local institutions (*anganwadi*, *Panchayat* committees, Fair Price Shop etc.)

Hosavaranchi Namma Mahiti Kendra, Uygodanahalli Gram Panchayat

♀ Background:

Hosavaranchi is a large village of about 1000 households in Uygodanahalli *Gram Panchayat* of Hunsur block. *Prakriye* initiated the *Namma Mahiti Kendra* in 2006, in partnership with *Mahila Samakhya* Karnataka. There are many women's collectives in this village – *Mahila Samakhya* collectives, *Stree Shakti* collectives and other collectives formed by various NGOs. Therefore, the Managing Committee has representatives from all these collectives. Further, the *dalit* youth group in this village has been very supportive of the activities undertaken by the women's collectives, and the *Namma Mahiti Kendra's* operations.

♀ Impact Area:

The villages of Ballenahalli, Halevaranchi, Gowdanakatte, and Siddalingapura.

♀ Activities:

- ◆ One-stop shop for information about schemes of line departments and key liaison point in the cluster, for line departments at the block level and the *Taluk Mahiti Kendra*.
- ◆ Providing public information and support in filing applications, for availing of welfare scheme benefits, to community members who visit the centre.
- ◆ Information outreach visits by information intermediary and Managing Committee members, to all villages in the impact area.
- ◆ Serving as a digital library that provides narrow casting of audio content and video screenings on request, to support citizenship education processes of women's collectives.
- ◆ Facilitating community audit of *anganwadi* functioning and mid day meal scheme in the village school in Hosavaranchi.



Managing Committee members and information intermediary of the Hosavaranchi Namma Mahiti Kendra conducting door-to-door visits, to provide inputs to the Panchayat in the beneficiary selection for the Nirmal Bharat scheme.



Video Screening at the Uygodanahalli Gram Panchayat, organised as part of a meeting to discuss furthering strengthening of Panchayat-Mahiti Kendra linkages.

- ◆ Mediating with the *Panchayat* Development Officer and Elected Members of the Uygodanahalli *Gram Panchayat* to strengthen the linkages of the centre with the *Panchayat*. As part of rapport-building, a digital photography training was organised for the *Panchayat* body.
- ◆ Inputs to *Panchayat* in the beneficiary selection for the *Nirmal Bharat* scheme in Hosavaranchi village.
- ◆ information intermediary participates in *Gram Sabha* and *Ward Sabha* regularly.

♀ Additional Facilities:

- ◆ Photocopy services
- ◆ DTP services for community institutions such as schools and *Panchayat*
- ◆ Computer literacy classes for school-going children in the community
- ◆ Photography services for personal and social events

♀ Key Highlights: Stories of Change

- ◆ In Hosavaranchi, the information intermediary's persuasion has resulted in an increasing number of Managing Committee members attending the *Ward Sabha* regularly.
- ◆ The Uygodanahalli *Panchayat* approached the information centre in 2013 to do a survey at the village level for identifying the list of households which were eligible for receiving grants under a rural sanitation programme for the construction of toilets. The list thus generated was tabled and accepted in the subsequent *Ward Sabha* – helping the information centre gain legitimacy in the eyes of the community.
- ◆ The Managing Committee of the Hosavaranchi information centre has established close linkages with the *anganwadi* and village school, and regularly monitors their functioning.

Future Plans:

- ◆ Strengthening information outreach visits.
- ◆ Strengthening linkages of the *Kendra* with the *Gram Panchayat* and organising more interactions between Managing Committee members and the *Panchayat* body.
- ◆ Strengthening the linkages between elected women representatives and women's collectives in all the villages in the impact area of the centre, and utilising a video-based module on 'gender and governance' to enable women to build their capacities in emerging as a political constituency.
- ◆ Voluntary enrollment of mobile numbers for voice-blasts through IVRS platform, on information about entitlements and government schemes on agriculture, livelihoods training, pensions, etc.
- ◆ Commencement of Voice Message announcements to user groups on various state schemes and information related to local institutions (*anganwadi*, *Panchayat* committees, Fair Price Shop etc.)
- ◆ Involving the *Panchayat* Development Officer in the creation of the Wiki based *Praja* (People's) Information System that is being planned.



Background:



Inaugural Day at the Bharatwadi information centre.

Bharatwadi is a remote village in Doddahejjuru Panchayat, which is very close to Nagerhole national park. It has about 400 households. Most of the population migrates to Coorg during the coffee-harvesting season – posing a challenge to community level events. *Prakriye* set up the *Namma Mahiti Kendra* in the *dalit* colony in this village, in September 2013, despite stiff resistance from the upper caste groups who were used to a situation where their neighbourhood housed all public infrastructure and amenities – be it the dairy, bus shelter, school, or *anganwadi*. Therefore, the centre was constituted with a Managing Committee drawn from women's collectives in the *dalit* neighbourhood originally mobilised under the *Mahila*

Samakhya programme. Over the past 8 months, the *Kendra* has slowly managed to re-build bridges with the upper caste groups, and today, the *Kendra* has visitors from all sections of the village community.



Impact Area:

Outreach efforts will be shortly initiated to the villages of Vijayagirihaadi, Rangammanahaadi, Hiriakyathanahalli, Doddahejjuru, Thattekerehaadi and Veeranahosahalli.



Activities:

- ◆ One-stop shop for information about schemes of line departments and key liaison point in the cluster, for line departments at the block level and the *Taluk Mahiti Kendra*.
- ◆ Providing public information and support in filing applications for availing of welfare scheme benefits, to community members who visit the centre.
- ◆ Information intermediary visits to all households in Bharatwadi village, as part of information outreach activities of the centre.
- ◆ A door-to-door visit by information intermediary and Managing Committee members, to identify the *dalit* households who are not availing the entitlements they are eligible for, under various governmental schemes.
- ◆ Serving as a digital library that provides narrow casting of audio content and video

screenings on request, to support citizenship education processes of the 2 *Mahila Samakhya* women's collectives that run the centre.



Additional Facilities:

- ◆ Computer literacy for school students.



Key Highlights: A story of change

A few months after the *Bharatwadi Namma Mahiti Kendra* was inaugurated, the women's collectives who were managing the centre, decided that a daily news paper would be procured by the centre, as the village had not seen a news paper in ages. Interested people who wished to read a paper would go to a neighboring village. The information intermediary visited the news paper agent at the block to find out how he could help them in reaching the news paper. The information intermediary and the women persuaded the agent to drop off the news paper with the driver of the bus that comes to the village. The bus drivers were open to dropping the news paper at the house closest to the village bus stop. However, this house belongs to an upper caste woman, who was very unhappy about the establishment of the information centre in the *dalit* colony. This option seemed to be therefore untenable, especially as the upper caste groups had fallen out with the *dalits*, over the question of where the *Kendra* was to be housed. This near-impasse was overcome, when a young woman from another upper caste household, who thought that the effort of the information intermediary to bring a news paper into the village was very pertinent, volunteered to collect the news paper and hand it over to the centre daily. Soon after, many upper caste people who used to go to the neighboring villages for news updates started visiting the centre for their daily reading of the paper. They also started becoming more open to the information intermediary's household visits, and treated her with increasing respect. Today, many visitors from the upper caste neighbourhood in the village visit the centre to avail of its various services and it is slowly gaining the status of a public institution.



Managing Committee meeting at the Bharatwadi Namma Mahiti Kendra.



Future Plans:

- ◆ Initiating information outreach visits to the neighbouring villages.
- ◆ Strengthening linkages with the *Gram Panchayat* and organising more interactions between Managing Committee members and the *Panchayat* body.
- ◆ Organising meetings between women's collectives and elected women representatives in all villages in the impact area, to enable the emergence of a gendered local governance agenda at the village.

- ◆ Voluntary enrollment of mobile numbers for voice-blasts through IVRS platform on information about entitlements and government schemes on agriculture, livelihoods training, pensions, etc.
- ◆ GIS mapping of school infrastructure (as per Schedule I of the Right to Education Act) of all schools in Doddahejjuru *Panchayat* and utilising these maps for dialogue and deliberation with the School Management Committees in the *Panchayat*, to undertake appropriate action.
- ◆ Involving the *Panchayat* Development Officer in the creation of the Wiki based *Praja*(People's) Information System that is being planned.

New Namma Mahiti Kendras being set up as part of the Poorna Shakti Kendras initiative

Prakriye is planning to set up two new *Namma Mahiti Kendras* in H.D.Kote block, as part of its efforts under the *Poorna Shakti Kendras* initiative. One will be initiated in Madapura *Gram Panchayat*, modelled along the lines of the existing *Namma Mahiti Kendras*. The second centre to be set up in Thumbsoge *Gram Panchayat* will adopt a different design, in which the *Panchayat* will play a more central role.

♀ **The new model being proposed for the Thumbsoge *Namma Mahiti Kendra*:**



Initial meeting with Panchayat members of the Thumbsoge panchayat to get their buy-in for setting up the Namma Mahiti Kendra.

The *Namma Mahiti Kendra* will be set up in the precincts of the *Gram Panchayat*. The Managing Committee will not only include representatives from the women's collectives, but also the *Panchayat* Development Officer and the elected women representatives of the *Gram Panchayat*. The idea here is to strengthen the linkages between the *Namma Mahiti Kendra* and the *Gram Panchayat*, right at the outset, with the aim of attuning the *Gram Panchayat* to the effective use of ICT possibilities for information outreach and micro-planning.

♀ Possible Impact Area:

The Thumbsoge *Namma Mahiti Kendra* will reach out to the villages of Itna, Jakkalli, Niluvagilu, Thoralli, Chowdahalli, all of which are a part of the Thumbsoge *Gram Panchayat*.



Mahila Gram Sabha, Thumbsoge

♀ Activities (January-March 2014):

- ◆ Rapport-building with the *Panchayat* body and the *Panchayat* Development Officer. A digital photography training for the *Panchayat* body has been organised, as part of the rapport-building processes.
- ◆ Obtaining in-principle approval from the *Panchayat* body for setting up the *Namma Mahiti Kendra* in the *Panchayat* precincts.
- ◆ Organising meetings between women's collectives and elected women representatives in Itna and Jakkalli villages in the proposed impact area, as a first step towards evolving a women-centric local governance agenda at the *Panchayat* level.
- ◆ Organising a *Mahila Gram Sabha* in Thumbsoge *Panchayat* to enable women's collectives in raising key concerns with their *Panchayat* representatives.

♀ Key Highlights: A story of change

At the *Mahila Gram Sabha* which was organised in Thumbsoge, women's collectives raised the following concerns before the *Panchayat* President and the *Panchayat* Development Officer:

- Many houses do not have adequate drinking water supply.
- Households which are eligible for electrification under the *Bhagya Jyoti* scheme have not received electricity connections.
- Streetlights are out of order.
- There is open sewerage in the village, which poses a health hazard.
- There is undue delay in the release of subsidies under *Nirmal Bharat* scheme. Also, there are irregularities with some households availing subsidy twice, for the same toilet!
- There is not enough information provided by the *Panchayat* about educational scholarships.

Following the *Mahila Gram Sabha*, the *Panchayat* took the following steps:

- Drinking water supply has been provided to all households.
- Streetlights have been repaired.
- Drains in the village have been cleaned and disinfected.
- The *Panchayat* Development Officer has suggested that when the *Namma Mahiti Kendra* starts its operations, a GIS mapping of all household toilets that have been constructed under the *Nirmal Bharat* scheme be carried out, in order to prevent fake claims for subsidy.

♀ Future Plans :

- ◆ The Thumbsoge *Namma Mahiti Kendra* will set up a *Panchayat* help desk to address queries of all visitors to the *Panchayat*.
- ◆ IVRS possibilities for creating closed user groups to send information alerts on the mobile, and a Wiki based *Panchayat* information system, will be explored.
- ◆ GIS Mapping of toilets constructed under the *Nirmal Bharat* scheme will be carried out, in follow-up of the action items emerging from the *Mahila Gram Sabha* organised here.
- ◆ GIS mapping of public infrastructure points in the village, to help the *Panchayat* streamline its annual budgetary exercise.
- ◆ Developing the Thumbsoge *Namma Mahiti Kendra* as a digital library, with an audio and video bank, that can support learning-action processes of women's collectives.

Taluk Mahiti Kendras at Hunsur and H.D.Kote blocks

♀ Background:



Information intermediary of the Hunsur Taluk Mahiti Kendra recording content for 'Kelu Sakhi'.

The *Taluk Mahiti Kendras* were established in 2006, as nodes that connect the government departments and other institutions at the block level, with the *Namma Mahiti Kendras* at the cluster level.

They are housed in the offices of the block federations of *Mahila Samakhya Karnataka*, who partnered with *Prakriye* in initially setting up the *Namma Mahiti Kendras*. The design of the *Taluk Mahiti Kendras* is similar to that of the *Namma Mahiti Kendras*. Each *Taluk Mahiti Kendra* has a Managing Committee and an information intermediary.

However, the Managing Committee at the block level is the Federation Executive Committee, constituted as part of the *Mahila Samakhya* programme. The Federation Executive Committee is a block level body, whose members are elected by the *sangha* women of the *Mahila Samakhya* programme, annually, from among the various village level *sanghas* in that particular block.

The Executive Committee is expected to take over the role of monitoring, management and coordination of the programme activities currently being performed by *Mahila Samakhya* staff – when the *Mahila Samakhya* programme withdraws from a district.



Women's collectives being introduced to a Tablet PC at the Hunsur Taluk Mahiti Kendra.

In Mysore, the *Mahila Samakhya* collective is withdrawing in 2014. This means that the *Prakriye* team will have to do some hand-holding of the Federation Executive Committees, during this phase, and help them transition into becoming independently functioning institutions at the block level.

Impact Area:

Each *Taluk Mahiti Kendra* draws visitors from villages all over the block. However, there are specific villages where the block level information intermediary carries out information outreach visits.

These are outlined below:

Hunsur Taluk Mahiti Kendra : Hosakote, Thattakere, Kattemalalavadi, Modur, Siddaiahanakoppalu

H.D.Kote Taluk Mahiti Kendra: Sawve, Belaganahalli, Nuralakuppe, Vaddaragudi, Haropura

Activities :

- ◆ Mobilising public information: Block level information intermediaries undertake monthly visits to government departments at the block level, and to other agencies, such as training institutes and NGOs, in order to mobilise new information. Additionally, they do website searches to collect new information published online by government agencies.
- ◆ Mobile phone-based networking with information intermediaries of the *Namma Mahiti Kendras* to enable two-way exchange of information between the block and village levels.
- ◆ Providing public information and support in filing applications for availing of welfare scheme benefits, to visitors.

- ◆ Information outreach – information intermediaries undertake monthly visits to all outreach villages that fall within the ambit of the *Taluk Mahiti Kendras*. During the outreach visit, information intermediaries utilise a Tablet PC with pre-loaded audio and video content, to generate dialogue and discussions with communities, around women's engagement with local governance structures; as well as to provide further information about various schemes of the state.
- ◆ Follow-up of referrals from *Namma Mahiti Kendras*, of specific cases where individuals have faced difficulties in entitlements processing.
- ◆ Screenings of community video content and narrow casting of audio content, to visitors, to trigger discussions on gender and governance.

Key Highlights:

The block level centres have helped individuals from the village communities, overcome hurdles in the process of claiming entitlements, without having to approach exploitative middle-men.

The linkages between the block and village level centres have helped village communities cross-check the veracity of explanations provided by *Panchayat* level representatives and government functionaries for delays in entitlement processing.

One of the information intermediaries at the block level has taught the other information intermediaries to search for muster-rolls under NREGS, which are published online, and examine them to identify gaps in implementation. Such peer learning processes are crucial to the sustainability of the *Namma Mahiti Kendras*.

Future plans:

- ◆ Strengthening the Managing Committees of the block level information centres.
- ◆ Utilising email and blogging platforms, to further strengthen linkages between block and village level information intermediaries.
- ◆ Utilising IVRS platform for targeted information outreach about entitlements and government schemes on agriculture, livelihoods, training, pensions, etc.

