



# Tech For Social Good: Examining The Social Outcomes Of Digital India In Gujarat

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## Abstract

The Digital India effort, inaugurated in 2015, seeks to convert India into a digitally empowered society by improving infrastructure, governance and public participation. Gujarat, as one of India's most economically developed states, provides a substantial framework to evaluate the social ramifications of digital change. By examining Indian digitalization, we seek to critically analyse (a) the methods by which socially engaged, early stage, high-technology firms integrate social and economic objectives to expand their ventures; and (b) the strategies employed by socially engaged firms to cultivate entrepreneurial opportunities and the facilitation of stakeholder institutions to enhance the value creation process. This research study analyses the social ramification of Digital India in Gujarat, concentrating on digital inclusion, financial inclusion-governance, skill development and entrepreneurship. The research utilizes qualitative analysis of secondary data from governmental publications, scholarly literature and case studies demonstrating that digital initiatives have significantly improved service accessibility, governance transparency and economic inclusion. Digital India possesses significant potential for social benefit, its efficacy relies on inclusive implementation, legislative backing and ongoing investment in digital infrastructure and skills. We discovered that the entrepreneurs, social motivation and goals are equally powerful motivators and are the main reasons for the scaling up processes. The motivation is bolstered by the proactive involvement of government efforts, which also include other essential stakeholders in the growth process. Digital technology and a strong desire to succeed among entrepreneurs often work together to create market opportunities and draw the attention of national-international foundations.

**Keywords:** Digital India, Gujarat, Social Impact, Digital Inclusion, e-Governance, Skill Development, Start ups.

## Introduction

The digital transformation in India was not possible without the intervention of the political and economic changes (Thomas, 2012) brought by the government. The Digital India Programme launched by the Government of India in July 2015, represents an initiative aimed at transforming the knowledge economy trying to bridge the digital divide and promoting inclusive growth. The programme seeks to transform the society into a digitally empowered economy, by enhancing digital infrastructure, improving online public services and increasing digital literacy among the citizens (Kedar, 2015). Through various initiatives like e-Governance, Digital Locker, Unified Payments Interface, Aadhaar Integration and other programmes the government is reshaping public administration and citizen engagement in India (Sheokand & Gupta, 2017).

In 1991 when World Wide Web was created it became a means of transfer of information and communication among the people. The digital systems through the use of computers facilitated in the communication and connection with people living in different geographical locations (West, 2005). The Governments realised that Internet was an effective tool for interaction with the citizens, commercial agencies and other organizations (West, 2005).

Scholars have argued that Digital India is not just a technological reform but a socio-economic strategy that is designed to strengthen transparency, accountability, inclusion and increasing the connectivity with various regions of the country (Sen, 2016). This programme has accelerated the digitalization across sectors like education, healthcare, agriculture, banking and governance, contributing to the economic modernization (Maiti, Castellacci, & Melchior, 2019). Digital India Programme plays an important role in fostering innovative methods in teaching, learning, commerce and administration. It enhances service delivery and promotes participatory governance in India today. Not only this, the development of the information technology has vastly contributed to the rise in the GDP of the country (Thomas, 2012).

The digital programme tries to see that there is universal access to phone connectivity, access to internet (Sindakis & Showkat, 2024), access to information for all, manufacturing of the supportive technology and hardware and creation of jobs using information technology (Kedar, 2015). With more than 560 million internet users in 2018 the programme would lead to the empowerment of the citizens through digitalization (Sindakis & Showkat, 2024).

## Literature Review

A lot of study has been done on the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in development using the ICT4D (Information and Communication Technology for Development) paradigm. Heeks (2018) says that digital technologies could make governance and service delivery better, but they could also make current inequities worse if access isn't equal. Bhatnagar (2019) emphasizes that the execution of e-governance initiatives in India has led to enhanced administrative efficiency and transparency. For the governments all around the world digital communication has become the strongest selling factor as it one of the most convenient methods of interaction with multiple stake holders in the society (West, 2005). The World Bank (2021) also talks about how digital technologies could help people get involved in the economy and have access to banking services.

Even so, the digital divide is still a big problem. Norris (2001) and Van Dijk (2020) assert that socio-economic factors, including income, education and geography, contribute to disparities in access to digital technology. The National Institute of Technology (NITI) Aayog (2020) (NITI Aayog, 2020) says that there is big difference between how well people in cities and towns in India can use the internet and how well they can read and write. Shah (2022) says that even while using digital technology has helped the economy grow and young people become more independent, rural areas in Gujarat are still behind when it comes to infrastructure and digital skills.

## Methodology

This study uses qualitative research methods and the following are examples of secondary sources that are used:

Government reports (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), 2025) (Reserve Bank of India (RBI), 2022) (NITI Aayog, 2020)

The scholarly literature and examination of public policy

Different reports from international organizations like the World Bank, the OECD and the United Nations Development Program

Different places to get news and case studies

The inquiry employs a descriptive-analytical methodology, focusing primarily on the discovery of major trends and the effects on society.

## Social outcome of Digital India in Gujarat: Digital & Financial Inclusion

Promoting inclusive participation in the digital ecosystem is crucial parts of the Digital India project. Mobile connectivity and low-cost data have made it much easier for people to get online (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), 2022). This growth has been good for the state because it has made it easier for people in both cities and villages in Gujarat to use digital services. To boost digital literacy, programs like the Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA) are being put into action (MeitY, 2021). On the other hand, there are still unfair differences, especially between people who live in rural areas and those who are on the fringes of society (NITI Aayog, 2020). Digital monetary exchange technologies, especially UPI, have changed the way people do business with money. Reserve Bank of India (2022) says that digital payments have grown quickly, which has helped more people get access to banking services. Demircukunt et al. (2018) say that digital finance makes it feasible for those who didn't have bank accounts before to acquire financial services. Digital payment techniques have helped several businesses in Gujarat, such as the textile industry in Surat (Economic Times, 2023).

## E-governance

E-governance helps drive the transformation aimed at under digital India. It wants to change the way government works by using Information and communication Technology (ICT) in clever ways. In general, e-governance is the use of digital technologies to make government services easier to use, more open and more efficient (Heeks, 2018). E-governance has become major driver behind modernizing government in Gujarat, transforming the way citizens' deal with the government in a big way. Digital government, has become a tool for transformation as it has increased the efficiency and transparency of the government agencies (West, 2005). It has also catered to increase in political participation by the citizens of the country, which further helps in instilling the feeling of trust among the citizens (West, 2005).

Gujarat has always been a leader in digital governance in India. The e-Gram Vishwagram project was one of the first steps towards digital changes that would come later. The program made it easier for rural individuals to access public services by connecting village panchayats through broadband infrastructure. This allowed them to interact with local administrative systems (Government of Gujarat, 2018). Based on it, the state has set up a number of digital platforms that have completely changed how public services are delivered. One of the most important changes to land administration is the AnyRoR (Any Record of Rights Anywhere) webpage. The digitalization of land records in Gujarat has made these problems less of a problem by allowing people to access information directly and in real time, which means they don't have to rely on middlemen (Bhatnagar, 2019). Along with land governance, e-governance projects in Gujarat have included a wide range of public services, such as online systems for filling complaints, e-procurement platforms, and digital certification services. By making digital records of administrative transactions that can be checked, these systems have made accountability higher. Today these government websites are creating a lot of traffic on the internet (West, 2005), as much of the governmental work is now done online.

The use of digital technologies in urban governance and law enforcement has made e-governance in Gujarat even bigger. For example, the use of e-challan systems has made traffic regulating processes automatic, which has cut down on the need for people to make decisions and the chances of corruption. Smart city projects in cities like Ahmedabad and Surat have also used digital platforms to improve traffic control, waste management, and public safety. E-governance has more inclusive by making it easier for everyone to use public services, especially for groups that have been left out in the past. The combination of digital identity systems with welfare delivery systems has made it possible to distribute benefits more effectively and with less waste, making sure that resources go to the right people according to the World Bank (Annual Report 2021).

### **Skill Development**

Skill development and entrepreneurship in Gujarat under Digital India exemplify profound societal changes in class mobility, occupational frameworks, and social inclusion. Digital platforms serve as instruments for the development of human capital, facilitating individuals – especially adolescents and underprivileged populations to get skills and access entrepreneurial possibilities (UNESCO, 2021). The student start-up and innovation policy and i-Hub Gujarat are two examples of how the government is helping to create a new digital middle class that works in jobs that are driven by innovation (Government of Gujarat, 2020). Digital tools give farmers, women and small business owners more authority on a small scale, which means they don't have to rely on conventional hierarchies and middlemen as much (NITI Aayog, 2025). This change fits with ideas about modernization and network society, where technology changes how people interact with each other and how they can participate in the economy. But ongoing differences in access, abilities and digital literacy make socioeconomic inequality even worse (Van Dijk, 2020). While digital initiatives foster empowerment and mobility, their overarching sociocultural influence is dependent on the rectification of structural inequities.

### **Rural Development**

India has a huge population that lives in the rural areas and therefore digitalization and internet access in rural areas becomes vital for the national development (Sindakis & Showkat, 2024). Digital technologies have transformed the economic landscape of rural places by facilitating access to information, employment opportunities and public services. Agriculturalists currently utilized mobile based platforms and ICT advisory systems to obtain real time information regarding weather conditions, crop pricing and agricultural techniques. From a sociological point of view, this transformation indicates a shift from traditional agricultural practices to rural economies centered on knowledge where in information serves as a crucial resource. The World Bank (Annual Report 2021) states that digital platforms have facilitated direct access for farmers and rural entrepreneurs to buyers, thereby altering traditional power dynamics and reducing dependence on intermediaries.

E-governance increases the democratic responsiveness. It improves capacity of the political systems to respond to the general population of the nation (West, 2005). The e-governance projects help rural areas grow even more by making it easier for people to get government services and benefits. Digital systems make things clear and make ensuring that benefits get to the right people, which builds trust in government (UNDP, 2021). Digital skill development initiatives also help young people in rural areas find jobs outside of farming, which is sign of modernization. But ongoing problems like the digital divide, poor literacy rates and deficiencies in infrastructure still make it hard for everyone to take part (NITI Aayog, 2020). These differences show how easy it is to make current inequities worse (Van Dijk, 2020). So, while digital projects can help rural areas change and give people more power, their long-term sociological effects depend on fair access and implementation that includes everyone.

## Case Studies

### Macro Level case studies

Macro-level case studies in Gujarat demonstrate how extensive digital activities under Digital India have reformed governance frameworks and developmental results. The e-Gram Vishwagram project is one of the most important examples. It linked local panchayats through broadband infrastructure and made it possible for people to receive government services from anywhere (Government of Gujarat, 2018). This program cut down on delays in administration and made it easier for people to get services at the local level. From a sociological standpoint, it enabled state encroachment into rural areas, fortifying institutional presence and transforming citizen-state relations.

The AnyRoR (Any Record of Rights Anywhere) site is another important intervention. It digitized land records and made them available online. This reform tackled long-standing problems of lack of transparency and corruption in land management by making it less reliant on middlemen (Bhatnagar, 2019). It also changed the conventional power structures by giving citizens direct access to important information. In the field of entrepreneurship, programs like i-Hub Gujarat, and the student start up and Innovation Policy (SSIP) are big steps in making innovation ecosystems a part of everyday life. These programs create a culture of entrepreneurship (Government of Gujarat, 2020) (i-Hub Gujarat, 2023). From a sociological perspective, these activities foster the development of a digital entrepreneurial class, indicative of transformations in occupational frameworks and economic mobility. In general, these macro level actions show how digital governance may change administrative institutions, make them more open, and systemic socio-economic change.

### Micro level case studies

Micro level case studies in Gujarat illustrate the immediate, tangible effects of digital initiatives on individuals and communities, showcasing the translation of macro policies into daily socio-economic transformations. The change of Akodara into a digital village, for example, made it possible for people to use cashless payments and mobile banking, which improved their financial literacy and made them less reliant on informal financial networks (Saxena, 2016). ICT based agricultural consulting services have also given individual farmers more influence by giving them real time information on crop pricing, weather and best practices. This has made it easier to make decisions, work more efficiently and make more money (NITI Aayog, 2025). These measures diminish dependence on conventional intermediaries, therefore transforming rural power dynamics.

In the business world, programs like i-Hub Gujarat and SSIP have helped students and young innovators turn their ideas into businesses by giving them access to digital mentoring and funding platforms (Government of Gujarat, 2020). These initiatives encourage people to be independent and come up with new ideas, which helps people to move higher in society. AI based solutions like computerized dairy advice systems have also given rural women more power by helping them learn new technical skills and be more productive. This is part of bigger efforts to give women more influence and include them. Micro level case studies show how digital technologies change the way people do things every day, making it easier for them to be more influential and include them. Micro level case studies show how digital technologies change the way people do things every day, making it easier for them to be more involved in social and economic processes.

The changes that have happened in Gujarat's digital ecosystem can be explained by both old and new sociological ideas. From a Weberian standpoint, e-governance embodies the rationalization of administrative frameworks, wherein bureaucratic procedures are supplanted with efficient, rule based digital system. Projects like AnyRoR and e-Gram Vishwagram show how this change toward formal rationality is making government less random and more predictable.

Simultaneously, the rise of digital entrepreneurship and interconnected economic activities corresponds with Manuel Castells' idea of the Network Society, which highlights the influence of information technologies in transforming social and economic relationships. Digital platforms in Gujarat allow people to join global networks for production, finance, and communication. This changes the way hierarchies

work. Additionally micro level case studies underscore the significance of individual action within these frameworks, wherein access to digital tools facilitates upward mobility and social inclusion. But, as sociologists have pointed out unequal access to technology could make existing inequalities worse, which shows how important it is to have digital relations that include everyone.

Dimension	Macro-Level Case Studies	Micro-Level Case Studies
Scale	Policy/ State level interventions	Individual/ Community-level impact
Examples	e-Gram, Vishwagram, AnyRoR, SSIP, i-Hub	Akodara village, farmers (ITC), dairy AI
Focus	System-wide governance and infrastructure	Daily practices and lived experiences
Impact Type	Structural transformation	Behavioural and socio-economic change
Sociological Lens	State power, institutional reform	Agency, empowerment, social mobility
Outcome	Improved governance, transparency	Increased income, skills, inclusion

### Discussion and outcome

The Indian government's support for high technology and funding for social conscience to help the country become globally competitive is a solid foundation for building social companies that use high technologies. It also helps people develop their own entrepreneurial skill by encouraging them to use their talent, knowledge and drive to make a difference in the world. When there is a good balance between personal preferences and institutional support, like what we see in our Gujarat example, there is a better chance of finding and develop other status also nationally and globally also.

The result of this study show that the digital India program has had a wide-ranging effect on Gujarat's economy and society. Digital technology has made things more efficient, accessible and empowering for citizens in areas like e-governance, financial inclusion, skill development and rural transformation. The use of digital platforms in government has made things more open and accountable, and it has also cut down on delays and chances for corruption (Bhatnagar, 2019).

From a sociological standpoint, these changes signify extensive trends of modernization and rationalization, where in conventional system are progressively supplanted by technology oriented, frameworks. Digital land records and online service delivery system are examples of e-governance projects that have changed how citizens and state interact, making it easier and more direct. Digital banking systems and entrepreneurial platforms have also helped create a new digital middle class that is marked by innovation, mobility and involvement in the formal economy (World Bank, 2021).

Case studies show how digital projects change ordinary life and work on a small scale. Farmers who use ICT-based advising services, entrepreneurs who use digital funding platforms, and rural women who use AI-based technologies are all examples of increased agency and empowerment. These changes fit with ideas about the network society, where being able to get information and connect to the internet is important for social and economic involvement.

The results of Digital India, on the other hand, are not the same for everyone. Ongoing issues including the digital divide, unequal access to infrastructure, and different levels of digital literacy still make these programs less inclusive (NITI Aayog, 2020) (Van Dijk, 2020). In numerous instances, persons possessing superior access to resources and education are more inclined to gain, hence perpetuating existing societal inequities. This shows a big problem between progress in technology and fairness in society.

Also, worries about cyber security, data privacy, and the ability of institutions to handle these issues are new problems in the world of digital governance (Digital government index 2019 results, 2020). As we depend more and more on digital technologies, we need strong rules and regulations and ongoing training for administrative staff. The results of this study indicate that Digital India has greatly improved social and

economic development in Gujarat. However, its long-term viability hinges on fixing structural disparities and making sure everyone has access. Digital transformation must be comprehended not solely as a technology process but as a profound social phenomenon, influenced by prevailing power dynamics, institutional capabilities, and patterns of inequality.

## Conclusion

Digital India Programme was started by the Government of India with the ambition of helping transform, empower India into a digitally competent society. Government of India launched a nationwide infrastructural development to accommodate digitalization (Kedar, 2015). India has emerged as an 'infonation' and had encountered a 'software miracle' (Sen, 2016). Nevertheless, that the benefits of digital transformation are not spread out equitably. Ongoing problems including the digital divide, low digital literacy, and differences in infrastructure keep people from having equal access to the modern technology, especially those who are already at a disadvantage. If digital policies are not applied fairly, these problems show how they could make socioeconomic inequities worse. Digital India in Gujarat shows how technology can be a strong tool for social good. However, for it to work in the long term, technical progress needs to be in line with strategies for development that are fair and open to everyone.

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