

(For immediate release)

9th February 2010

ekgaon wins NASSCOM Social Innovation Honours 2010 award

ekgaon technologies, the New Delhi based firm developing information technology innovations and services for rural areas, has won the NASSCOM Social Innovation Honor 2010.

NASSCOM Foundation established the Social Innovation Honors to recognize excellence and encourage innovation in social development initiatives. NASSCOM Foundation and Genpact jointly presented the Social Innovation Honors for 2010 to showcase projects that demonstrate the use information communication technology (ICT) as a tool for social transformation. This award is a celebration of innovations that bring about social change and development through the application or use of technology.

ekgaon received the award for the ground breaking e-governance project entitled "MERCComs – Tracking Entitlements of Rural Communities for Rural Livelihood Security in Odisha." **ekgaon** was the technology partner for the project that included Concern Worldwide, an Irish non-government development agency and Women's Organization for Socio Cultural Awareness (WOSCA), a non-profit working with various government departments to ensure social welfare program delivery for the poor in Odisha.

The award ceremony was held on February 9, 2010 at the Grand Hyatt hotel in Mumbai. Mr. Ashok Chavan, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, presented the award at the NASSCOM Leadership Summit, which was attended by the top managers of global IT companies. The Grand Jury panel for the IT award included Mr. N. R. Narayana Murthy, Founder-Chairman of Infosys Technologies Limited, Mr. T.N. Ninan, Chairman and Editorial Director of Business Standard Ltd, Ms. Rama Bijapurkar, BoG IIM, Ahmedabad, Mr. Jerry Rao, Founder, Chairman and CEO of Mphasis Corporation and Mr. Saurabh Srivastava, Cofounder and former Chairman of NASSCOM and Chairman of the Indian Venture Capital Association.

The award recognizes excellence in IT innovation for social impact. It identifies initiatives that are making a difference in the lives of millions such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and how information systems can stop leakage of funds due to fake attendance. For poor households social security schemes such as MGNREGA can provide a vital safety net. Unfortunately most of these programs owing to poor implementation as well as corruption in the delivery system. In some states of North East, it was found that funds were transferred under the MGNREGA scheme to even doctors and engineers. In Uttar Pradesh alone the leakage was estimated at Rs 850 crore, according to a government report.

The Government of India is aiming to enable government services by 2013 to all its citizens, with over Rs 20,175 crore investment in its National e-Governance Plan (NeGP). In the MGNREGA alone the proposed allocation for next year 2010-2011 is over 45,000 crore, aimed at benefits the poorest in the country.

Regular audits and studies have identified that there is a need for greater transparency at all levels of service delivery to ensure entitlements reach the intended recipients. Citizens need information about how the government has delivered the services in order to strengthen their bargaining position when asking for reforms. Monitoring Entitlements for Rural Communities (MERCComs) is a mobile tool for tracking entitlement delivery for all citizens.

Concern Worldwide and WOSCA partnered with **ekgaon** technologies to design and implement the MERCComs system in Ghatagaon and Banspal blocks of Keonjhar District in Odisha. These areas are home to large tribal populations of whom 80% live below the poverty line.

MERCComs is a social audit platform that can be localized in English, Hindi and Odiya for NGOs and volunteers to monitor rural entitlements. MERCComs framework developed by **ekgaon** allows central tracking of rural entitlement disbursement through a decentralized field monitoring units and partners using a mobile phone application. The system captures transaction data that serve as evidence for the delivery made to all the persons being covered or are eligible to be covered under the NREGA, Public Distribution System (PDS) and various Pension schemes such as the *Madhu Babu Pension Yojana*.

The system can generate a wide range of reports that are shared with various levels of government to advocate for anti corruption drives and promote reform. The results of collecting information on entitlements empower people to push for corrective measures and become advocates for their own reform.

Receiving the award, Mr. Rohit Magotra, Chief Operating Officer of **ekgaon** said *"the technology has created not only transparency in tracking social entitlements but we have also proved that effective mechanism for delivery of services through mobile phones. We are looking forward to scale the solution throughout the country and provide the solution through leading mobile phone service providers"*.

"We are using technology for feeling the pulse of people and putting the last first", said Mr. MDP Nayak, Programme Coordinator, WOSCA, when asked how MERCComs is helping in their campaign for transparency in Social Welfare schemes.

On receiving the award, Mr. Sisir Pradhan, Programme Manager of Concern Worldwide said, *"this is an wonderful experience of working through this process wherein simple technology has made significant experience in proactive transparency in the delivery of Social Security Services through a right based community driven approach. Such recognition reaffirms the larger role of such innovations making development reach to the poor"*.

Mr. K Sasikumar, Asst. Vice President (Product Development) at **ekgaon**, reiterated commitment of the company towards development of technologies that drives innovation to bring equity, adding *"a competent technology platform should offer low operational cost and allow scale for wider distribution of services"*. **ekgaon** excellence has been internationally recognized, it also won the Dell Small Business Excellence Award in 2009.

Earlier the project case study paper *"MERCComs - Tracking Entitlements of Rural Communities for Livelihood Security in Orissa"* was given the Best Paper Award of the Compendium at the 12th National Conference on e-Governance held on February 12, 2009 in Goa by Government of India.

Mr. Vijay Pratap Singh Aditya, CEO, **ekgaon** opined that *"Good governance can be achieved only when the citizen aided by information as power can demand change"*. He added that although RTI Act has given the power to people for seeking information, however the means to do the same have not been enabled, **ekgaon** aims at providing these tools to people through innovative technology applications, accessible at *All times* from *Anywhere* in there local language.

With the NASSCOM award the MERCComs product gets national recognition as one of the best e-governance initiatives in the country. It has potential to further scale and act as a direct link between citizens and their government by using mobile phones as a portal for all kinds of government services.

For further information please contact:

Mr. Rohit Magotra	ekgaon technologies	M: +91 9868501826	Email: info@ekgaon.com
Mr. M D P Nayak	WOSCA	+91 9437055864	Email: wosca@rediffmail.com
Ms. Beenita Meher	Concern WorldWide India	+91 674 2394238	Email: beenita.meher@concern.net

Please visit website for more details: <http://ekgaon.com/award2/>

For more information on awards please see

<http://www.nasscomfoundation.org/index.php/NASSCOM-Social-Innovation-Honours/Shortlisted-Applicants.html>