

## Digitally-enabled in Alapadu

G Naga Sridhar

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Financially able Vemana Raghavamma, right, with U Anusha, a business correspondent, after withdrawing her pension through the Aadhaar-enabled micro ATM G Naga Sridhar

*The hamlet ranks first in AP for using the Aadhaar-based system for transactions*

For the 3,000 inhabitants of Alapadu, a small hamlet 80 km off Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh, the use of Aadhaar has brought about a digital revolution.

One of them is Vemana Raghavamma, a 68-year-old bed-ridden woman. "I could never imagine that things will become so simple and convenient," she says. While earlier she had to depend on someone going to the post office to withdraw her monthly pension of ₹1,000, now she doesn't need to move out of her bed.

Instead a banking correspondent (BC) comes with a micro ATM, which has an attached device to capture her finger print. "My Aadhaar number has come to help me now," she says with a broad smile after giving her thumb impression to the banking correspondent to withdraw money.

Raghavamma is one of many who have reaped the benefits of Aadhaar in Alapadu, which ranks first in the State when it comes to the use of the 12-digit number for financial transactions. Alapadu has also reported 100 per cent linkage of Aadhaar with bank accounts.

Behind this digital drive is a lone Andhra Bank branch. Podapati Venkateshwarlu, Manager of Andhra Bank's Alapadu branch, sees Aadhaar as the fulcrum of a range of services including civil supplies, disbursement of old-age pensions and Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment schemes (MGNREGA). "We have seeded all our accounts with Aadhaar in this village and customers are able to see the benefits," he says. The village has four BCs, making up for the need for more bank branches.

Says Ganga Devi, one of the more experienced business correspondents in the village: "There could be more benefit if the limit of ₹5,000 on withdraw/deposit of money from Aadhaar-based micro ATMs is doubled. The facility to undertake transactions without an ATM card is the main advantage," she adds.

### **Beyond banking**

Aadhaar has helped in other ways too. "The ration supply was always an issue for us due to fake beneficiaries. With Aadhaar-based system, we are able to receive it more regularly," points out PS Rammohan Rao, a farmer.

"Andhra Pradesh has already started using Aadhaar for civil supplies. The same is being implemented in Telangana too," says N Satyanarayana, Assistant Director General (Technology), Unique Identity Authority of India (UIDAI) of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana.

In addition, AP is also using Aadhaar for tracking attendance of students who receive scholarships in colleges and the same will also be followed soon by the Telangana Government in polytechnic colleges.

According to the UIDAI data, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have 100 per cent Aadhaar coverage as per 2011 census. If one goes by projected population for 2015-17, Aadhaar coverage is at 80 per cent and 100 per cent in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, respectively.

### **Tough task**

“Initially, we struggled along with business correspondents to motivate people to get Aadhaar enrolments and link it with their bank accounts. Now people are realising the advantages,” recalls G Krishna, Assistant Manager, Andhra Bank.

It helped during the demonetisation drive. “Andhra Bank gave us cash to be distributed at door steps of Aadhaar-linked customers through micro ATMs during those days of cash crunch,” recalls CSM Raju, a business correspondent from Kotrada village in Krishna district. Aadhaar has helped, adds Raju, making government’s insurance schemes ‘a hit’ here. Alapadu has been ranked second in the country in subscription of low-premium insurance schemes .

### Challenges

As many customers have multiple accounts in different branches of the same bank, Aadhaar linkage is turning to be tough in some cases. Efforts are on to link all accounts of a customer under one identity number.

There is also difficulty in capturing finger prints of the elderly and the working class people as their fingers tend to get soft making it difficult for the machine to read the lines. However, in such cases Iris data which is also captured by Aadhaar could be used, point out UIDAI officials.

(This article was published on March 13, 2017)

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