

Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank Ltd. launched a one of its kind “e-card” Program for rural women in Maharashtra on 9th May, 2010 at Mhaswad, Satara. Mann Deshi was pleased and honoured to have Dr. K. C. Chakrabarthy, Deputy Governor, RBI preside over the inauguration. The agenda for the day included flagging off bicycles for girls, felicitation of graduates of the Business School, narration of certain clients’ experiences and a speech by **Mr. Stuart Davis, CEO of HSBC India**. The program was proceeding in the presence of the prestigious Commissioner of Cooperatives.



It was a long and struggled journey through this day. Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari as a cooperative bank was started by the share capital of local women and as well as by the deposit of

local women. There was no outside funding and it took three years to make the institution totally sustainable and a profit making bank. Today with no outside funding bank is operating at seven branches in the districts of Maharashtra, Dharwad and Karnataka. Mann Deshi provides a unique door-to-door banking service to its clients. It conducts a business school for rural women and young girls with no formal education. The goal of the same is to provide technical and marketing skills for them to start and improve small enterprises. The bank thereby provides the women with the opportunity to set up an entrepreneurial undertaking by providing both knowledge transfer as well as funds in the form of loans and savings. More and more women have begun benefitting from this unique system and gradually concerns about the security of their funds and account information have come to the fore. The women were apprehensive about sharing their account information with their husbands and other family members lest they be used at times and for purposes against their wishes. To safeguard their interests some women even began to leave their passbooks behind at the bank. This gave rise to the innovation that is the e-card.

What initially started as a simple solution to this problem has now become a fully operational tool for rural financial inclusion. Under the new system, e-cards will be rolled out to about 13,000 of the banks’ clients. Handheld devices have been manufactured by Intel with software designed by Atyati to be used by the field agents for their daily collections using the e-card. This device is a complete solution which would enable biometric authentication, e-card reading, printing of receipts and basic

form filling and collections. Not only this, the process is being undertaken with HSBC Bank as the knowledge partner/adviser and with the support of SIDBI. A HSBC staff team joined the launch phase for the last 6 months. The implementation was also being assisted by MBA students of S. P. Jain Institute of Management and Research, one of the top-ten Business schools of the country.

The e-card is another one of Mann Deshi's continuous endeavours to serve the rural women. It brings with itself several benefits to make the entire process of banking simpler, faster and more convenient for the rural women. The e-cards will not just enable security of the account information of the holder but also provide a sort of status symbol for the women who carry it. It will help eliminate the redundancy brought about by creation of multiple accounts by customers at different points and times. The e-card is a giant leap towards automated banking enabling enhanced reach and faster expansion. Together the device and e-cards as a system hold the potential to make door-to-door banking more comprehensive so as to include not just collection but also account creation, withdrawals and loan grants.



There has been great enthusiasm on the part of the clients of the bank for this solution. "If I have a card, I have control on my money. Nobody can have access to my hard-earned savings," says Laxmi Lokhande, one of the numerous clients of the bank to be benefitted by this solution. Like her, several women have come forward with valuable insights and feasible inclusions to make this a holistic solution for their problems. Everyone is now waiting with bated breath as this innovation moves to its implementation under the sanction of the RBI. So the challenge has just started with the launch! The hardest tasks will follow by implementing the technical details and the process of connecting 13,000 women with the e-card system. All field agents need trainings and preparation to use the new handheld devices in an efficient manner. The new technique has to be synchronized with bank's database. And last but not least the women have to be introduced to the new system. So this cutting-edge e-card system offers both challenges and benefits to the Mann Deshi Mahila Bank and the women in rural India.