





# ICTs AS TRAJECTORIES OF CHANGE: *In Pursuit of Shakti or Lakshmi?*

Dr Shoba Arun

Manchester Metropolitan University

[s.arun@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:s.arun@mmu.ac.uk)

# ICTs in a Global Society

-  Role of Information and Communications Technology (ICTs) in the global society is central to understanding transformations that are characteristics of the information society and post modernity.
-  Emphasis on technological determinism is useful in tracing social and economic changes at large, but the economic and social shaping of technology is often illustrative of wider social relations, with local considerations.
-  Technology is socially-contextualised, with gender differential barriers to access and use of ICTs by men and women (Hafkin and Taggart, 2001).
-  Techno-feminism: Technical fields and IS systems are highly gendered in industrialised countries (Wajcman, 2004; Webster, 2005)

# In Pursuit of Lakshmi?

- Issues for southern countries:
- Neo-liberal ideologies and blind pursuit of market forces: Technology Parks, Software boom
- Enabling environment: local, national and international levels through policies, legislations. Increasing foreign investment, outsourcing.
- Enabler of growth through enterprise growth and employment
- Reconciling goals of development and economic profit?

# Key principles of WSIS

- Multi-stakeholders and partnership
- To improve access to information and communication infrastructure, capacity building, increase confidence and security in the use of ICTs,
- To create an enabling environment, develop and widen ICT applications, foster and respect cultural diversity; recognise the role of the media; address the ethical dimensions of the information society; and encourage international and regional cooperation.
- Inclusive information society
- Digital Solidarity Fund, public-private sector partnerships

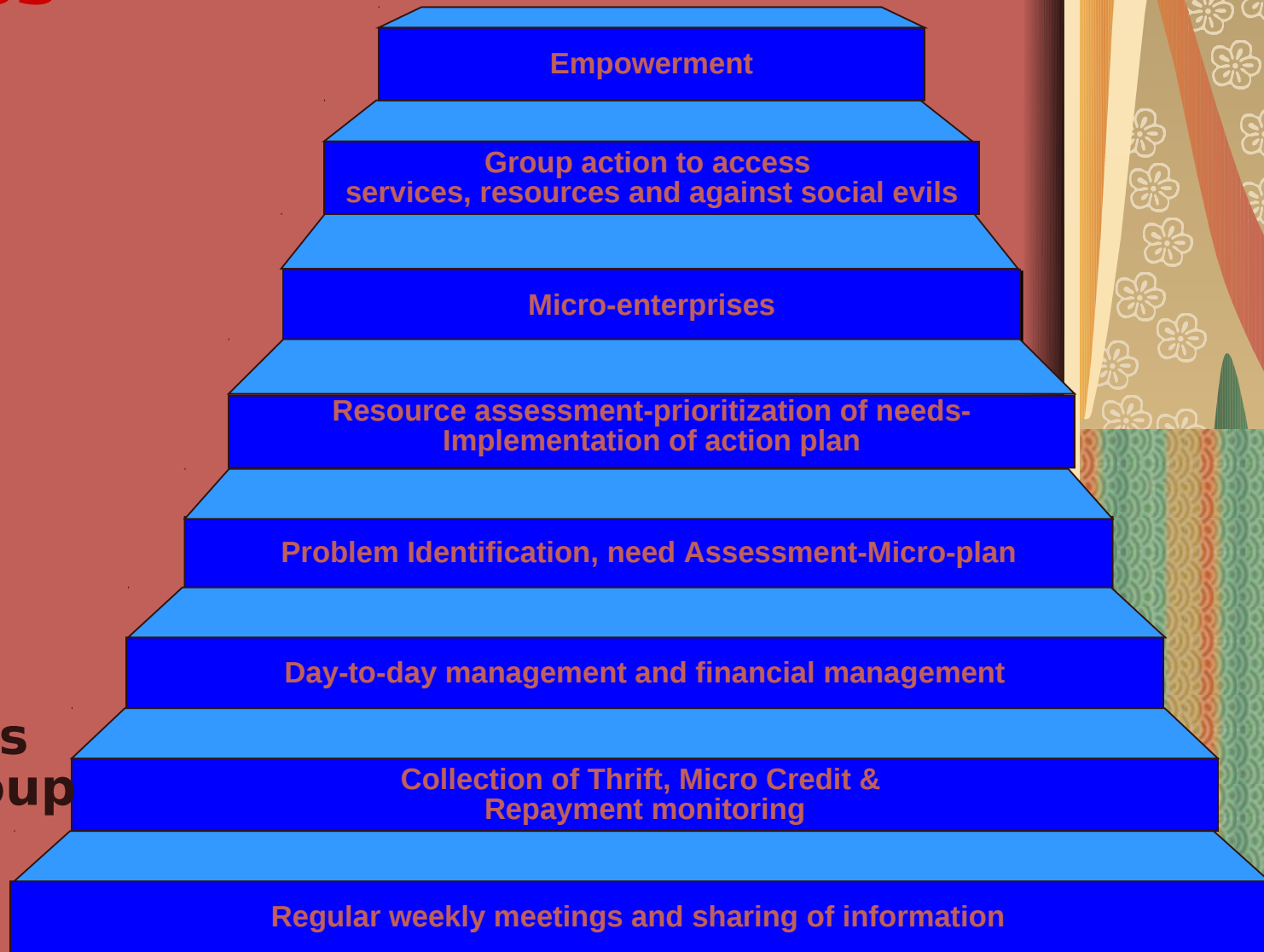
# Grameen Phone: Connectivity

- Grameen phone, established by Grameen bank to manage the bank's interests in telecommunications, and Telenor AS, the primary telephone company in Norway.
- Careful design of the project and recognition that good businesses were good development.
- Rural entrepreneurship, creation of infrastructure and connectivity capacity building and effective partnership.
- Success story : Commercial operation providing cellular services in both urban and rural areas and already has 250000 customers, obtained international financing.
- Viable village concept, making \$2 per day, \$700 annually which is twice the country's annual per capita income.
- Selection of entrepreneurs through records, skills, location. Positive Impact on other business
- ICT applications: development and use of application suitable to local conditions and involving multi-stake holders , eg Akshaya
- development of local content and promoting better governance

# Kudumbashree

- State interventionist poverty eradication strategy, strongly gender-focused. *Kudumbashree* – which means ‘prosperity of the family’ – is an initiative of the Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM)
- Kerala Model of Development
- Launched in 1999 as a women-oriented, participatory and integrated approach to fight poverty
- Partnership of local councils (panchayats), government of Kerala, NABARD, banks and community based organisation
- Neighbourhood Help Groups (NHG) or *ayalkootams* –formed as the basis for each Kudumbashree unit.
- Micro-enterprise units include a range of activities

# The Process



**Dynamics  
of the group**

# Micro Enterprise Development

## What is a Micro Enterprise?

1. An enterprise with investment ranging from US\$120 - to US\$5555
2. Turn over between US\$2222 and US\$11111
3. Generating at least US\$33 per member per month
4. An enterprise fully **owned** , **managed** and **operated** by members themselves



# Employment through ME :

## Steps

1. Training of trainers for Business Opportunity Guidance and Entrepreneurship Development.
2. Developing Micro Entrepreneurship Development Programmes
3. Orientation Programme for Micro Enterprise Volunteers
4. Conducting Training Programmes
  - Orientation Programmes
  - Entrepreneurship Development Programmes
  - Skill upgradation programmes
  - Performance Improvement Programmes
5. Facilitating enterprise set up
  - Implementation support
  - Follow-up with Bank, Financial Institutions, other statutory bodies, etc.
6. Monthly Programme monitoring and evaluation

# Motivating Entrepreneurs

## - Kudumbashree Model

**Strengthening entrepreneurial support system to provide needed facilities**

**Providing funds through financial institutions and banks**

**Imparting continuing education on various aspects of Management to systematic management of enterprises**

# ICT Micro Enterprises

- ✿ IT- Data Processing and IT enabled services
- ✿ IT@School(Vidyashree)
- ✿ Hardware units

# IT Units

| Sl No | Name of District | IT Unit   | IT@School  | Hardware |
|-------|------------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| 1     | Trivandrum       | 8         | 3          | 2        |
| 2     | Kollam           | 3         | 5          |          |
| 3     | Pathanamthitta   | 4         | 11         |          |
| 4     | Alappuzha        | 8         | 15         | 1        |
| 5     | Kottayam         | 8         | 2          |          |
| 6     | Idukki           | 5         | 1          |          |
| 7     | Ernakulam        | 11        | 11         | 1        |
| 8     | Thrissur         | 8         | 14         | 1        |
| 9     | Palakkad         | 5         | 6          |          |
| 10    | Malappuram       | 7         | 34         |          |
| 11    | Kozhikkode       | 4         | 12         |          |
| 12    | Wayanad          | 2         | 12         |          |
| 13    | Kannur           | 5         | 13         |          |
| 14    | Kasaragod        | 2         | 11         | 1        |
|       | <b>Total</b>     | <b>80</b> | <b>150</b> | <b>6</b> |

# Case study of IT Unit

- Technoworld Digital Technologies
- 15<sup>th</sup> sept 1999
- Group of 10 from BPL families
- Human Capital: Educational and technical qualifications
- Financing: assisted under DWCUA under SJSRY
- Initial status: 5 computers, 1 UPS, 1 laser printer
- Nature of Work Done: digitisation of panchayats, PF card preparation.

# Activities

- Data processing
- Training
- Hardware assembly and maintenance
- Software development
- Website designing, hosting and maintenance
- DTP
- Internal Outsourcing

# *Trajectories of Empowerment*

- Income: \$ 42 per month
- Earning dependent on ability
- Allowance for administrative duties (GL, Secretary)
- Shift nature of jobs (employment to youth)
- Life stories; grassroots struggles, overcoming social and economic barriers
- Trajectories of economic, social and political empowerment

# Livelihood Analysis (Arun et al 2004)

- DFID project
- Changes in assets
- Physical
- Human
- Social
- Financial



# Challenges

- Obsolete nature of technology
- Lagged payments
- Competition vs Cheap labour
- Low skilled sector?
- Staff retention
- Gender issues in the context of flexibility
- Sustainability
- State intervention



# *In Pursuit of Shakti..*



- Challenge is to harness the potential of ICT to promote MDGs
- Understand complex relations between gender and technology
- Marginalisation and feminisation thesis in post-industrial societies
- ICTs are socially deterministic, context dependent, Challenges to technocracy and post-modernity: Reflexivity
- Vandana Shiva: Revival of Shakti as a feminine creative principle for synthesis