

Workshop on “Development in the Information Society – Exploring a Social Policy Framework”

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Workshop Report



IT for Change

With
HIVOS
Bread For All

United Nations Development Programme
Social Science Research Council, New York
International Development Research Centre



Acronyms

APC – The Association for Progressive Communications
BFA – Bread For All
CSC – Common Service Centres
DOI – Digital Opportunities Initiative
EU – European Union
FOSS – Free and Open Source Software
GOI – Government of India
HIVOS – Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries
IAS – Indian Administrative Service
ICT – Information and Communication Technologies
ICTD/ICT4D – Information and Communication Technologies for Development
IDRC - International Development Research Centre
IIIT-B – Indian Institute of Information Technology - Bangalore
IIM (A) – Indian Institute of Management – Ahmedabad
IIM (B) – Indian Institute of Management – Bangalore
IS – Information Society
IT – Information Technology
ITfC – IT for Change
MDG – Millennium Development Goals
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
MKSS – Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan
NeGP – National E-Governance Plan
NGO – Non Governmental Organisation
NIC – National Informatics Commission
NISG – National Institute for Smart Government
NREGA – National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
PMO – Prime Minister’s Office
RTI – Right to Information
SHG – Self-Help Groups
SSA – Sarva Siksha Abhiyan
SSRC – Social Science Research Council
VOIP – Voice over Internet Protocol
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNU – United Nations University
WSIS – World Summit on the Information Society

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A. Introduction

The three day workshop on **Development in the Information Society - Exploring a Social Policy Framework**, held by IT for Change in January 2007, brought together diverse development actors to engage with information society debates, critiquing current approaches and articulating sharp intersections between information society paradigms and development priorities, through an examination of what, how and why. The group of participants comprised representatives from government (of India and other countries), NGOs, social movements, academia and donor agencies.

The workshop was divided into five thematic sessions. These sessions were:

Session I: Core Issues of Development: Making the ICT Connection

Panelists : Ms. Radhika Lal, Mr. Rajeev Sadanandan, Mr. Luthfulla Atheeq, Mr. Ashis Sanyal, Dr. Devinder Sharma & Mr. N. Shivkumar.

Moderators: Dr. Shobha Raghuram & Mr. Vickram Crishna.

Session Summary: This session looked at how the information society was impacting or could potentially impact core development domains.

Panelists in this session comprised of development practitioners from government and civil society who shared experiences of convergences between information and communication technologies (ICT) and development from their respective domains. The majority view expressed by panelists was that the current dominant ICT paradigm with a strong emphasis on private sector considerations does not serve disadvantaged communities. An overemphasis on technology rather than on information has led to skewed development. It was felt that there is an urgent need to re-define the current ICT paradigm in a way that development domains take charge of their ICT needs to best serve sectoral goals. Not incorporating ICTs is not an option since they offer tremendous possibilities which cannot be ignored.

Session II: Citizenship in the Information Society: Taking Stock

Panelists: Mr. Rodrigo Assumpção, Mr. Nikhil Dey, Ms. Gayathri Kalia, Mr. Ashok Krishnan, Mr. T. Pradeep & Mr. Sanjay Jaju.

Moderators: Mr. Mokwining Nhlapo & Dr. Basheerhamad Shadrach.

Session Summary: This session focussed on ways in which ICTs could be used to revitalise governance – both in its service delivery and participation aspects – from a citizen-centric perspective, and what policy lessons have emerged from early initiatives.

The session was clearly one that generated animated discussions where panelists discussed ways in which ICTs are reconstituting the understanding of citizenship. Panelists felt that ICTs clearly have an important role in re-vitalising governance. A few opined that outsourcing front-end e-governance processes would serve to strengthen democracy as governments could then concentrate on their core deliverables and not have to bother about peripheral issues. It would also lead to

decreased corruption. However, a majority of panelists and participants felt that the entire business of outsourcing governance processes reduces citizens to consumers and weakens democracy. It was felt that governments need to incorporate ICTs as part of their national development agenda or else it will lead to social exclusion.

Session III: ICTD Theory and Practice: The Global-Local Spectrum

Panelists: Dr. Michael Gurstein, Mr. Chanuka Wattedegama, Mr. Mokwining Nhlapo, Dr. Amin Alhassan, Dr. Paula Chakravartty, Dr. Yuezhi Zhao & Dr. Rahul De.

Moderators: Mr. Rodrigo Assumpção & Mr. Willie Currie.

Session Summary: This session critiqued the evolution of ICT for Development (ICTD), as a domain of knowledge and practice, specifically examining how development notions had been reconstituted in ICTD rhetoric.

The presentations in this session gave a snapshot of ICT initiatives adopted by developing economies the world over. The Brazilian government has taken upon itself the mandate of digital inclusion, since in that country, digital exclusion directly leads to social exclusion. There, ICTs are not meant for business but for social development. The case with South Africa is somewhat similar with the government embarking on a ten year plan for digital inclusion which includes comprehensive plans for local content & infrastructure development. The story from China tells us that although the country has seen tremendous development especially in the arena of telecommunications, it cannot be termed as an information revolution but rather a digital revolution. This is because the benefits have only reached coastal communities, while the hinterland has yet to see the benefits of liberalisation. It was also felt that Southern civil society needs to be more vigilant and ask more questions of governments and corporations, something which is not being done.

Session IV: ICT Requirements for a New Development Paradigm

Panelists: Mr. Rishab Aiyer Ghosh, Mr. Prabir Purkayastha, Mr. Vickram Crishna, Mr. Sudhir Krishnaswamy, Mr. Willie Currie, Ms. Soumya Kidambi & Mr. Seán Ó Siochrú.

Moderator: Dr. Michael Gurstein.

Session Summary: This session looked at ways in which ICTs could redefine development related systems; the ICT vision required for this purpose and the corresponding policy imperatives.

Panelists offered insights into ways in which ICTs can revolutionise development. A few participants felt that the information society was a paradigm shift in itself, in the sense that it offered opportunities which could not have even been dreamt of earlier. The power of the Internet to duplicate and disseminate information at no extra cost, the possibilities for communities to collaborate on various issues was mind-boggling. Participants also spoke of new and emerging community led network models like community radio and Free and Open Source Software (FOSS), which are bottom-up & decentralised and offered a viable alternative to the current centralising, rent seeking ICT discourse. It was strongly felt that current ICT discourse which has developed at the behest of developed nations, work to the disadvantage of developing economies and there is an urgent need for countries to develop ICT policies which reflect their development agenda. The limits of technology were also

discussed by some panelists.

Session V: Towards a National Policy Framework on Development in the Information Society

Panelists: Ms. Anita Gurumurthy, Mr. T.R. Raghunandan, Mr. M. Sivasankar, Mr. R. Gopalakrishnan.

Moderator: Dr. Subhash Bhatnagar.

Session Summary: This session looked at key cornerstone aspects for institutionalising the social policy approach to ICTD, rooted in the development context and experience of the South. It compared policy approaches, and argued for a strong and purposeful policy regime that would allow development priorities to be addressed in the myriad information society (IS) issues.

It was felt that the first step towards any social policy formulation is the recognition that ICTs are not an enabler or a tool, but the fact that they directly shape our lives and the way we do things. One needs to be extremely conscious of this fact while formulating social policy. It was also felt that policies need to recognise and respect community processes. Current policy approaches offer minimal engagement opportunities for communities and this lacuna needs to be corrected. Community ownership needs to form an integral part of any development policy.

This workshop report is organised along the lines of the major issues that were debated. These include-

- Connecting ICTs with development
- ICTs & community ownership and participation models
- ICT financing mechanisms: A function of how ICTs are constructed
- Governance & e-governance
- Region specific topics

The debates brought about a range of perspectives from multiple actors and there were varying degrees of agreement on different issues, which was especially encouraging as it was one of the objectives of the workshop.

B. Setting the tone – Validating the existence of the information society

A significant feature of the workshop was the entire discussion around the fact that the IS had well and truly arrived. There were short but powerful statements from different participants throughout the workshop which clearly pointed to the fact that we were in the information society.

Ms. Radhika Lal from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York was the first participant to mention this. She noted that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2003 and 2005 clearly gave legitimacy to the term 'information society'; and emphasised that it creates a space where there could be discussions and debates on a framework which treats information technology (IT) as a part of the IS, rather than equating it to the IS. She commented that, "In the context of the WSIS that was held in 2003 and 2005, at least at the global level, many of us were happy that the word 'society' was used. What it means is that it is no longer just a discussion about IT. It provides a legitimate space where larger issues of development are debated and IT is just one part of it."

Mr. Prabir Purkasthaya of the Delhi Science Forum talked about the emerging possibilities of the IS. He said that a testament to the information society is the fact that any kind of information can be digitised and made accessible to communities at near zero cost. It also gives these communities real opportunities to collaborate and take on the might of proprietary organisations. He cited the example of Wikipedia, where collaborative efforts have created knowledge bases which far exceed those created by corporations

In another context, responding to certain participants who were sceptical of the emergence of the information society and argued for 're-engineering of government processes' before incorporating ICTs, **Ms. Anita Gurumurthy** from IT for Change (ITfC) elaborated that these issues cannot be seen as linear and that reform of governance cannot be seen as a necessary precursor to the introduction of ICTs. In fact ICT mediated governance models may themselves help governance reform through paradigm shifts, "You know you don't have a choice. You are already there, you are not grafting anything, that thing (ICTs) has grafted itself on top of you."

She also pointed out that ICTs are not to be viewed as a tool or an enabler, "They co-constitute our reality and they are not out there, rather we are in them and they directly shape our life."

Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh from ITfC opined that ICTs bring certain possibilities which could not be conceptualised in the pre-information society era. The Right to Information (RTI) Act is a classic illustration of the information society phenomenon. He pointed out that the future of the RTI is through ICTs, where people do not have to seek information; rather the information is readily available through the Internet. Thus such a process improves governance processes. Such possibilities are only possible because we live in the information society.

These statements made at the workshop clearly demonstrated that the information society is a reality and that there is an urgent need to engage with it. Also, the information society brings with it tremendous opportunities which could not be thought of in the pre-information society age.

C. Connecting ICTs with development

C.1. Core development areas

One of the more vibrant debates was that of connecting ICTs with core development areas. Here there were varied opinions among participants; some who were sceptical of the idea of ICTs in core development domains; some who showed guarded optimism and then there were those who were highly optimistic regarding connections between these two sectors.

Not surprisingly, actors/practitioners from core development areas were those who expressed reservations with the entire notion of ICTs in core development areas. Their views stemmed from the opinion that ICTs in many ways are out of sync with development processes and end up taking a path of their own rather than supporting development interventions.

Mr. Rajeev Sadanandan, Ex-Secretary, Department of Health, Government of Kerala highlighted this when he spoke about the need for ICTs to be 'a response to something which was there in the system'. He said that observing the existing ICT literature and projects is indicative of the fact that most of the policy approaches begin with software applications.

He elaborated the case of the health sector and suggested where ICTs could specifically be implemented. He talked about the need for governments to invest in ICTs in a way that do not further the digital and social divide by subsidising the rich. An important step in ensuring this is to insist on inter-operability standards for health information systems. He drew a comparison between the US health sector, where fragmented digitised health systems only serve the interest of the rich as opposed to countries like UK and Germany where inter-operability is mandatory and has led to an integrated health system.

Mr. Sadanandan saw great value for technology in the area of developing integrated community databases. He said, "There is tremendous logic for building integrated village databases. If you have separate databases, and have them talk to each other, it will be easier for developing health plans and also integrated livelihood plans. The ever-reducing costs of hardware and software now make it possible to generate electronic health records for the entire family."

Mr. Luthfulla Atheeq, the State Project Director, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA)¹, Government of Karnataka shared his experiences from the education sector. He too was sceptical of the possibilities of ICTs in 'traditional' development sectors. His contention was that the way ICTs develop is often determined by market forces and that is a problem. He shared some of his quandaries with the group. Mr. Atheeq opined that it is not clear what the role of computers in education should be. He added that until basic issues like the lack of local content, band-width and electricity

¹ The SSA, a project by the Government of India aims at universalisation of elementary education. For more details, please visit <http://ssa.nic.in/>

are resolved, ICTs cannot really help. He added that despite of ICT application in the education sector, there has been no real improvement in learning levels and emphasised that the way forward is to have competent teachers.

Dr. Devinder Sharma from the Forum for Biotechnology & Food Security took a critical look at the current ICT interventions in the agricultural sector. He said that rather than concentrating on technologies in the agricultural sector, there is a need to look at other 'harsher realities' - issues of minimum support prices, electricity, and subsidies. He cautioned against the unbridled use of technology as a panacea for all ills, rather, one needs to look at appropriate technologies.

Mr. N. Shivkumar from Swasti Health Resource Centre brought the debate back to its basics. He spoke about the need to differentiate between ICTs as a tool and information as the content. He said that there is an urgent need to focus on what ICTs can and cannot do, and that the entire romanticisation with technology has led to this situation, (where talk regarding technology, and not information has become the dominant discourse) and the focus has to be brought back to information. He talked about the current information communication systems being centralised and technology driven, which creates burdens rather than benefits for communities and added that information management systems should be decentralised such that communities can actually benefit from them.

Mr. Shivkumar also saw a disconnect between community monitoring mechanisms and ICTs, and the urgent need to bridge this gap. He said, "Coming to the issue of community monitoring, there are various mechanisms like community vote, social auditing, and community radio, but somehow we do not seem to make the critical jump between community owned mechanisms and ICT. If you are doing a social audit, why can't you videotape it so others can access it?"

Mr. Nikhil Dey from Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) said that talking about websites to people who have never seen the Internet is a challenge. He added that the entire ICT debate has become restricted to computers and technology and has steered the debate from the crux of the matter, i.e. information. He commented that, "Information is an extremely potent political issue. It's been mentioned by many people this morning and I only reiterate that it's the politics of what you decide—after that everything follows. If you have decided that you are not going to share a certain kind of information, then no matter what kind of technology comes into play, it's going to have little value."

Ms. Gayathri Kalia from the Government of Andhra Pradesh expressed optimism about ICTs in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)². She said that the administration has realised that ICTs are required as a tool to enable the implementation and monitoring of the NREGA process. While there are other implementation and monitoring processes, the administration is convinced that ICTs are an equally effective way of achieving the desired results. In addition to this, ICTs enable monitoring of the rights and entitlements guaranteed under the Act.

² NREGA is an act of the Indian Parliament passed in 2005. The primary objective of this act is to provide livelihood security to people in the rural areas by guaranteeing a minimum of 100 days of wage employment in one financial year to one household. For more information, please refer to <http://nrega.nic.in>

Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh highlighted the need to take ICT policies out of the domain of the IT department and move them to the relevant line departments (health, education, rural development etc). He said, "I want to make a relation between these uses of IT and the core ICT policies that are anchored in ICT departments - connectivity, software, content and Common Service Centres (CSC)³ policies. Unless we make that connection, I don't see how a rollout, whether it's a Panchayat⁴ or social inclusion project can succeed." Mr. Singh also commented on a statement of Mr. T.R Raghunandan, from the Panchayati Raj department, who had mentioned that they (the department) outsourced their software requirements to the National Informatics Centre (NIC) because they do not have the expertise to do it themselves. In reference to this statement, Mr. Singh said there needs to be a system which ensures that the users come together and define their perspectives on software rather than thinking that these decisions are part of the 'software processes'.

Taking this discussion further, Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh talked about the possibilities of ICTs and decentralised governance processes. He gave the example of government kiosks, where different line departments offer government services. These kiosks are currently under the mandate of the IT department. However, if one observes the true spirit of decentralised governance processes, it demands that these kiosks be managed by the Panchayats which are the embodiment of decentralised governance processes. In this way, it should be the Panchayat and not the IT department which should be the service provider. He concluded by saying that with the CSCs being implemented, there is a need to look at this new level of decentralisation.

Ms. Radhika Lal echoed these thoughts when she said that IT cannot be left in the hands of IT professionals. The current situation, where IT is left to IT professionals, has led to the 'over engineering of technology solutions and under engagement with stakeholders'.

On a different note, but one which also connects to the development debate around ICTD **Dr. Paula Chakravarty** from University of Massachusetts, Amherst took a critical look at civil society movement in the South. She posited that civil society in the South is not the kind which held the state and the market accountable unlike their counterparts in the North. She pointed out to what she calls the 'NGOisation of civil society', a result of 'multilateral aid organisations in the North advising and funding NGOs in the south'. This model reduces the autonomy of civil society in the South. She argued that rather than viewing civil society as a space of 'emancipation against repressive state capital', it can be viewed as a 'non-state governance factor'.

Many participants thus critiqued the 'dominant' ICTD framework in traditional or core development areas while offering critical reflections and ideas on how to embed ICTs in a way that can support participatory and community oriented development.

³ CSCs are an integral component of the National E-Governance Plan (NeGP). For further details, please refer to www.mit.gov.in/download/cscguidelines.pdf

⁴ Panchayat is a village level local self-governance unit in India. For more information, please refer <http://panchayat.nic.in/>

C.2. The Right to Information and social audits

The RTI movement and its subsequent enactment are aimed towards better governance and this is another issue which came up for discussion during the workshop.

Mr. Nikhil Dey spoke extensively about the RTI movement, of which he has been part of right since its inception. In his view, what distinguishes the RTI campaign in India is the fact that it 'has been owned and led by organisations of poor people with a very definite link between their own politics and the politics of information'. He said that till recently, information had been used as power against people. In the case of the RTI movement, citizens first asserted their birthright to information and then they had it put within the legal domain in the form of the RTI Act.

He added that through a set of seventeen obligations, the RTI Act places a great deal of responsibility on the government. If the implementation of these seventeen obligations are met, that would be a huge victory in itself.

In response to Mr. Dey's presentation, **Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh** said that for RTI to become a much more potent tool, it needs to become 'an instrument of political participation of a citizens' stakeholdership in governance' and that's when it would really take off.

Mr. Singh stressed that there is a need for an interface between ICTs and the RTI that can empower citizens, and move beyond a management information system (MIS) approach. This systemic approach is seen as an embedded way in which ICTs can enable citizen participation in governance, encouraging an open dialogue between citizens and government.

Ms. Soumya Kidambi from MKSS talked about the social audit process used in the NREGA and the role it plays in inducing transparency and making government officials accountable. She played a video clip which demonstrated the entire social audit process. In her view, the role of ICTs in the NREGA process presents a set of unique challenges. Ms. Kidambi opined that the entire ICT process is so technical that it often leaves the community disempowered. If there are problems with the computer, it often means that people have to go without their wages, even though the NREGA stipulates regular disbursement of wages. She saw more value in providing solutions which are practical and offer ease of use to communities who are mostly illiterate. She pointed out to practical problems like power-cuts and non-flexibility of the software which defeats the entire purpose. She summed up her presentation by saying that technology has to be such that the local communities can relate to it.

Dr. Balaji Parthasarathy from Indian Institute of Information Technology - Bangalore (IIIT-B) agreed with Ms. Kidambi's point and added that in his experience, ICTs tend to become centralising technologies. This is because although ICTs are promoted as a means of decentralisation, they also necessitate 'economies of scale' which often called for centralisation, and this defeats the entire purpose.

The debate on RTI reflected two points of view, one presented by Mr. Dey which talked about the RTI movement in itself, where he focussed on the need to ensure implementation of the Act and a second thought process where Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh commented that the need to create an interface between ICTs and the RTI in ways that could empower citizens.

D. ICT financing mechanisms: A function of how ICTs are constructed

Another highlight of the workshop was the intense debate regarding ICT financing mechanisms, and this topic came up repeatedly with differing opinions and participants sharing their experiences and views to buttress their stand.

Mr. Ashis Sanyal from the National E-Governance Plan (NeGP)⁵ of Government of India took a strong view in favour of privatisation. He was of the opinion that ICT projects cannot be treated as philanthropic missions and that they need to be financially sustainable. He saw them being sustainable through an entrepreneurial model that charges people for accessing services.

Mr. Sanjay Jaju, the Municipal Commissioner of Hyderabad, in his presentation, shared his experiences from the E-Seva⁶ project in West Godavari, Andhra Pradesh. He opined that ICTD projects should not be subsidised and felt that they should be profit centres. His entire approach was that by outsourcing the front end of the governance process, which is 1% of the process, the government can concentrate on 99% where its core competency lies. He said that outsourcing does not necessarily mean dilution of citizenship, since 99% of the processes are still controlled by the government. Rather, it brings about efficiency in the system and the government can then concentrate on re-engineering the back-end which is the weak-link. He was of the opinion that citizens are ready to pay an extra Rs.10/- to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, as opposed to going to a government-run centre where s/he has to deal with issues of corruption and non-delivery of government services. And in this sense, he supports private participation of the front end.

However there were participants who felt otherwise and their views are shared below.

Mr. Rodrigo Assumpção from the Brazilian government narrated the very interesting experience from Brazil where according to him, digital exclusion is not an option and where the government has taken on the programme of digital inclusiveness for the citizens. He observed that although a significant percentage of citizens in Brazil have access to the Internet, 90% of these citizens are from high income backgrounds and this represents a severe distribution problem. Thus, the problem of social exclusion is made harsher by 'digital exclusion'. Mr. Assumpção added that if governments do not promote digital inclusion, it amounts to social exclusion. He added that in Brazil, unless people know skills of word processing, creating spread-sheets, browsing the Internet, the chances of employment are pretty slim. He said, "In other words, you carry this machine (computer) on your back or you will not be entitled to inclusion in a society that you should belong to."

Mr. Assumpção emphasised that digital inclusiveness is not business, but rather a right which all citizens are entitled to. He said that in the future, 'digital inclusion will spur a developmental wave which will enhance business, however it is not business per se'. He concluded, "Digital inclusion exists to ensure citizenship rights, social

⁵ For more information regarding the NeGP, please refer to <http://mit.gov.in/default.aspx?id=115>

⁶ For more information on the E-Seva project in West Godavari, please refer to <http://www.westgodavari.org/>

inclusion and encourage local and national development. It might enhance the computer industry, it might enhance the hardware industry, but it's not the objective of the policy. The success of digital inclusion initiatives is only possible by involving communities in management."

Mr. T. Pradeep from Samuha echoed similar feelings. He was of the opinion that the entire entrepreneurial model in development projects is a 'complete sell-out'. Worse is the fact that many in government circles are cheering this model. He compared the entire entrepreneur-led kiosk model to the ongoing water privatisation process which he saw as 'a dilution of responsibility by the government in a critical area that touches on the life and wellbeing of its citizens'.

He concluded by lamenting the fact that the definition of governance has been transformed into products and services along with the dilution of citizenry into consumerism.

In her presentation, **Ms. Anita Gurumurthy** critiqued the dominant ICT models; one being the 'enabler' approach and the other being the 'private-sector' led model, both of which undermine the role of the state. According to her, the 'enabler' role sees a very minimal role for the state, because invariably 'these are models which are mooted and proposed by technocrats, people who have an inherent allergy for the state, people who believe that it's important to keep the state at arm's length'.

There is an inherent silence regarding the political economy question. In her view, "It's very important to understand here that political economy is a very important lens that allows us to see how as a country we can make certain political choices."

She argued that we are at a stage where we can 'shape policy architecture' and 'create a new information literacy', which will shape the lives of the citizens of India. European Union (EU) policy documents on ICTs have clearly established that 'technology' is not just an enabler, but rather shapes our lives. She said, "Digital technologies don't just enable us to do things. They shape how we do them. In a sense they co-constitute our realities."

Ms. Gurumurthy also highlighted the critical role that public funding played in ICT projects and endorsed the Brazilian government's stand on public funding as elaborated by Mr. Assumpção. She said that one cannot 'close one's eyes and believe that without allocating additional resources', development projects can be implemented.

Ms. Radhika Lal expressed similar concerns about ICTD theory and practice which relegates state to a non-entity and which looks upon private participation as emancipatory. She said that she finds this entire notion rather frightening.

Dr. Amin Alhassan from York University, Canada shared experiences from his study on the Ghana telecommunications sector, where efforts to reduce disparities by opening up this sector to private players have failed. He said that no one questions private sector failure and that it is time to challenge World Bank led formulations, the adoption of which often ruin the economies of developing nations. He gave the examples of telecommunications growth in the US, UK and Germany, where it is not private players, but governments that have made substantial investments which have led to overall growth in those countries.

Mr. Willie Currie from The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) gave a historical account of the ICTD debate and explained how the frameworks developed initially have shaped the ICT agenda. He critiqued these frameworks and posited an alternate social policy framework. He remarked that the Digital Opportunities Initiative (DOI) report talks about focussing on fostering an environment which 'creates significant multipliers and network effects that would create a virtual cycle of social and economic development dynamic where ICT would play a dominant role'. This model forms a significant part of the present ICT discourse. He said that in the year 2003, the DOI report identified 'entrepreneurial-model' as a key feature to ICTD projects. WSIS 2003 and 2005 picked up the threads from these models and recommended that all countries develop national e-strategies with a focus on application like e-health, e-agriculture rather than talking about developing a visionary approach.

Mr. Currie presented an alternate ICTD framework, with a focus on developing a national e-strategy having an emphasis on open access infrastructure, shared broadband network which is public in nature and not subject to profit incentives. He said that such an e-strategy should focus on the country's interest in Internet Governance, adoption of FOSS, and promotion of localisation of languages.

With the exception of few participants, the majority view was that ICT financing should not be left to private considerations as they tend to have their own agenda. In fact, there is a serious need to question the 'efficiency' discourse associated with the private participation model, rather, governments need to invest in ICTs as it is a part of their mandate to which they must be made accountable.

E. ICTs & community ownership and participation models

There were also various discussions around community ownership and participation models in development projects and the role of ICTs in this regard. However, most of these discussions were limited to community ownership as seen from a traditional development perspective and the discussion around the potential of ICTs was thus limited. Some of the topics discussed included the current level of community ownership in development projects, ways in which this could be expanded, experiences of organisations in this regard, the potential and pitfalls of ICTs, new models of community ownership and participation - specifically community networks, community owned telecentres and the collaborative nature of FOSS.

E.1. Case studies

Ms. Gayathri Kalia spoke extensively about the NREGA and the vital role that ICTs (the software used to implement and monitor the entire process) play in the entire endeavour. She said that the design of the scheme and the software monitoring the scheme are such that they factor in community participation, by letting the Panchayat decide the kind of work they wish to undertake and the way they want to undertake it.

Although she was positive about the implementation of the Act, she pointed out that several challenges remain, "One of the challenges that we are facing is that people for several years have been recipients of patronage and recipients of munificence at the whims of power centres. So suddenly when you go and tell them that 'no, you have the right to demand and we will respond to your demand', it's not really something that they grasp or believe overnight, so there is a need to build up a formal follow-up and redressal or punitive action process".

Mr. T. Pradeep shared a rather interesting experience at Samuha where they have created information support groups as a part of community ownership processes in development projects, and detailed, "We look at groups of at least 3-5 boys and girls from each village who could actually become information assistants, the ones who would actually do the work, who would actually learn the technology, who would actually act as the interface between the community and the larger systems outside of this particular part."

He was of the opinion that the above mechanism along with government investments in ICTs in rural areas, can become nodal points for providing government information and can revolutionise the way people understand technology.

Mr. Sivasankar Nair from the Education Department, Government of Kerala narrated the experience of Akshaya⁷ telecentres where community ownership comes through decentralised local self-governance institutions, which have considerable authority over the entrepreneurs who run Akshaya centres. He was of the opinion that even an entrepreneurial project can have sufficient community ownership built

7 For more information regarding Akshaya project, please refer to www.akshaya.net/

into it if entrepreneurs are held accountable to local self-governance institutions. He said, "I believe that an entrepreneur model can be a very good model. In Malappuram⁸ what we have is the fact that there is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Panchayat and the entrepreneur and he practically comes under the Panchayat. The relationship between them has to be on an equal footing and the entrepreneur should have an active relation with the Panchayat. And the Panchayat should be the boss of the entrepreneur."

Mr. Nair said that the process of empowering citizens cannot happen by putting a computer (in a community) and expecting people to use it as a magic-box, rather there is a need to create an environment where people can learn ICT skills, in a way that they can make use of it in their daily lives. He concluded by saying that social empowerment should be an integral component of any ICT project and that the Akshaya project fulfils this mandate.

Mr. Chanuka Wattegama from UNDP, Sri-Lanka shared the interesting experience of 'Sarvodaya' telecentres. These telecentres are largely driven by the community. This network of telecentres, with a presence in 11,000 villages, is located in village offices that are regularly accessed by villagers. They are run by volunteers and the entire initiative is bottom-up and is driven by villagers themselves.

On a separate note, regarding issues of infrastructure development and generation of local content, he said that both of them should develop hand-in-hand and should be in consonance with what the community finds appropriate.

E.2. Enhancing the scope and definition of community ownership and involvement

There was also considerable debate and discussion on the traditional understanding of community ownership and the need to enhance and broaden this definition.

Mr. R Gopalakrishnan from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) drew an interesting parallel of community ownership with FOSS, when he talked about the community coming together and building a development program which is relevant from their point of view. He explained, "What we're suggesting is a process in which the community needs to be engaged in an open source model to construct their own understanding in their everyday lives of what's happening around."

However, his view of community ownership and involvement was limited to that of community evaluation, which drew a response from participants especially **Mr. Nikhil Dey** from MKSS who suggested that there is a need to look at community participation beyond 'evaluation' and commented that one needs to look at a larger conceptualisation of 'community ownership' i.e. from the stage of ideation itself.

In response, **Mr. Gopalakrishnan** said that while consultation at the level of project planning must be the ultimate objective, this may not always be possible and that the parliamentary process is one way of ensuring a democratic and consultative process, although it is not an end in itself. He said that the government is seeking different ways to make the process of project design more consultative. Foremost

⁸ Malappuram is a district in the state of Kerala, India.

among these are initiatives like inviting online comments on policy papers.

Mr. Gurumurthy Kasinathan from ITfC pointed out that the community ownership component of CSCs needs to be strengthened. He said that policy frameworks need to give a clear role for community influence on the entire aspect of the CSC programme rather than just restricting it to monitoring.

E.3. Community networks

Mr. Rishab Aiyer Ghosh from the United Nations University (UNU) talked about the advantages of FOSS and explained how it allows for community ownership and participation. He explained, "In case of software, with the proprietary model, you are dependent on the owner to make changes. It means in the economic sense, local organisations can only provide shallow support; they can't really help you in the economic sense because they need permission of owner of software. With free software, local organisations can provide deep support. It depends on their skills but this means a much higher part of value added locally is retained locally instead of disappearing in royalties."

Mr. Vickram Krishna from Radiophony espoused the power of community led networks, specifically community radio, as opposed to hierarchical networks which are inherently top down in their approach. He commented, "Community networks built from the bottom not top, not dictated by people who live in cities, provide employment and much of the money spent in creating and maintaining these networks will be spent locally. They are cost effective, the registration only costs a few hundred rupees, it is participatory, and it involves community and is robust." He talked about the need to develop local inexpensive technologies to facilitate change process.

Mr. Seán Ó Siochrú from NEXUS Research talked about the potential of community networks. To him, technology networks do not merely exist to provide access to ICTs, but also have a larger imperative of empowerment and development, a network where the community can create the content and not have to seek it elsewhere. A community driven network co-operative fulfils these purposes. Mr. Siochrú commented that telecommunications policies in developing nations have led to a situation where telecommunications companies do not venture outside urban areas, creating disparities and negatively affecting rural communities. Providing ICT access to rural communities has fallen in-between policy areas. He elaborated on the community network programme with which he is involved. This model with high speed wireless networks connects all stakeholders. He said, "The content of services is tailored to local needs because they are developed by a local entity. Additional services such as radio or video can be very important. In Cambodia, we are introducing community radio as part of this network and the role we see in local animation and development of local capacities is very critical."

Mr. Siochrú was enthused about the role that Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) can play in connecting rural communities, especially given the fact that it costs a fraction that mobile telephony costs (this is in light of the fact that in African countries, cell operators do not cater to rural communities and if they do, the tariffs are phenomenally high).

Dr. Michael Gurstein from the Centre for Community Informatics gave an insight into Wal-Mart operations, which according to him represent the largest information management system in the world. It is a world wide logistics chain which is also into retailing. The power of Wal-Mart is such that other corporations have to change their information management systems to suit Wal-Mart's operations. In terms of revenue, Wal-Mart represents the 10th or 11th largest economy in the world and has the muscle-power to engage into direct negotiations with states and that represents a significant threat. The only threat to this 'totalitarian' conglomerate is in the form of local resistance, 'primarily small business people at the local level who get together and use planning to restrict penetration of Wal-Mart into local areas'.

Dr. Gurstein drew an interesting parallel of this resistance to alternate telecentre model possibilities. He said that just as local communities come together and create shared and open access information systems to take on Wal-Mart, communities in India should come together and develop open access community initiatives (telecentres) which could then mobilise resources and take on dominant telecentre models.

Mr. Ashok Krishnan from the National Institute for Smart Government (NISG) endorsed Mr. Gurstein's stand and drew a parallel to the Common Service Centres. According to him, while with the Wal-Mart model, at least people can go and seek out other vendors, with the CSC's becoming the sole window for citizens to access government services, citizens do not have any option to avail these services elsewhere at regular costs and the CSC's in effect will become a monopoly.

Dr. Basheeramad Shadrach from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) said that new developments in journalism like 'citizen-journalism reporting' have clearly demonstrated that citizens can take advantage of ICTs and bring transparency in governance.

There was a strong consensus that although the importance of community ownership processes in development projects has increased, its scope needs to be enhanced. One needs to look at community ownership beyond evaluation frameworks and develop frameworks where communities are an integral part of development projects, right from the inception stage. Developments in technology like FOSS, community radio, open access telecentre models offer tremendous opportunities for communities in this regard.

F. Governance & e-governance

F.1. Governance: Issues of citizenship & decentralisation

The debates in the workshop – in large parts - revolved around citizenship, the meaning of which, as was flagged, seems to have become increasingly blurred with the privatisation of essential services, where citizens are treated as consumers. Participants cautioned against this dilution of citizenship and spoke about the need to reclaim this space. The debate itself was triggered by the opinion of a few participants who advocated an efficiency approach that necessitates the involvement of the private sector in certain areas of governance. This opinion was then challenged by other participants who felt that these actions will undermine the definition of citizenship and democracy as we know it.

Mr. Sanjay Jaju argued for private sector participation in governance processes. He shared his experiences from the E-Seva project, which he pioneered, where the front-end e-government processes have been outsourced to private players. He said that in the case of E-Seva, the privatisation process is such that it is women from Self-Help Groups (SHG) or members of youth groups who are in fact the front-end of the governance process. In this model, two purposes are served, one of social empowerment of disadvantaged constituencies and second, where citizens are happy because governance processes are more efficient and there is reduced corruption. He said that citizens are more than willing to pay a little extra for this enhanced efficiency.

Mr. T. Pradeep said that this new model of charging money from citizens to access 'services' which are actually their 'entitlements', has signalled a shift where citizens become 'consumers' and 'entitlements' become 'goods & services'; and it is precisely this system which weakens democratic processes.

Dr. Michael Gurstein commented on the case in Canada where government-led ICT initiatives has resulted in a 'democratic deficit', inspite the fact that the country regularly tops e-government polls. He remarked that as more and more government services are delivered electronically, the participation of citizens in the democratic process has significantly reduced. He added that e-government processes have come at the expense of e-governance processes of community inclusion, participation and control. He said that the entire notion of treating 'citizens' as 'consumers' is extremely disconcerting and that every country must be very careful in dealing with such issues. Citizenship is a much broader concept and citizens have legal rights, while consumers only have formal rights. He opined that the current approach of 'customer relationship management' and 'service-delivery' is extremely dangerous for democracy and citizen participation, and governments must encourage processes which enhance citizenship, political participation and inclusion.

Dr. Gurstein said that e-government is increasingly being mistaken for e-governance. He commented that e-government with its focus on 'service-delivery' and 'customer relationship management' is certainly not e-governance. On the other hand, e-governance is a broader concept. It is a process of 'enhancing citizenship, political participation and inclusion'. He added that it is important to recognise these

governance processes, and not treat citizens as consumers. He said, "Customers have formal rights, citizens have legal rights. Citizens have a specific area of responsibility and control over the nature of the services. I think it's a very slippery slope to conceptually not distinguish between these and I think in the long-run having an exclusive focus on e-government to the exclusion of e-governance is a very dangerous thing for democracy and for citizen participation."

On the issue of decentralised governance, there was a lively debate on towards the end of the workshop on the third day.

Mr. T.R. Raghunandan of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India gave a brief talk on the progress of decentralised governance in India. He presented his views on potential ICT interfaces/interventions with the Panchayati Raj department. He said that the part where ICTs can play an important role is in re-organising the internal management processes of Panchayats so that they are better equipped to provide services. One of the challenges which he saw is the lack of local content. The way forward as he saw it is to create local content along with ICT training for village Panchayat representatives who can then take charge of their development process. Mr. Raghunandan added that this is easier said than done, given the inherently complex nature of technology itself.

In response, **Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh** said that there are tremendous opportunities between ICTs and decentralised governance processes. He said that village knowledge centres/telecentres/Internet kiosks which are run by the government and which provide a range of government services should come under the ambit of the Panchayats rather than being run by the IT department, as it the Panchayat which is the embodiment of decentralised governance. He added that the CSCs being implemented by Government of India (GOI) offer a good opportunity to implement this idea.

In the same debate, on a related topic of community ownership as a measure of decentralisation, **Mr. Gopalakrishnan** opined that GOI is committed to broadening the scope of decentralisation and while the current level of understanding is limited to community monitoring and review of development projects, this understanding is constantly changing and there will be at time when communities will be an integral part of project planning and design.

Thus, it was strongly felt that the privatisation of governance & e-governance processes is something which a country like India cannot afford since this would directly lead to a destabilisation of democratic processes specifically citizenship and political participation. Communities need to have a final say in development processes and this needs to be enshrined in public policy.

F.2. E-Governance in India - critical reflections

The debate regarding e-governance reflected views on existing E-Governance initiatives and the upcoming ones, specifically the NeGP and CSCs, in India.

Dr. Rahul De from Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore (IIM-B) in his presentation talked about e-governance projects in India, and specifically the case of

Bhoomi⁹, a Government of Karnataka ICT intervention. The Bhoomi project which began in 2001 with an aim to digitise land records and titles, did not attain the stated impacts. In fact, land holdings and landless labourers were negatively affected. This was because the system did not address basic issues of land redistribution or power redistribution; the only people who benefited were rich farmers. In this way the project played into the hands of those who were already well off and further entrenched the existing feudal systems. The design of the project with stand-alone kiosks did not attempt to address larger development issues, which led to its failure.

Later on in the discussion, **Ms. Anita Gurumurthy** questioned this 'failure' notion of Bhoomi and said that while it may be true that the Bhoomi project may not have changed the status quo, 'what it certainly has done is to introduce a beast called as a computer to villagers', initiating a change process that is an important step in itself.

The entire workshop debate regarding CSCs had to do with the fact that a fair number of participants felt that the CSCs model is driven by private considerations that would harm the interests of communities whom it in fact aims to serve.

Mr. Ashis Sanyal who is part of the National E-Governance Plan explained the entire concept of CSCs. He said that CSCs provide e-government services at the click of a button, which save citizens the hassle of standing in queues and makes the process of service delivery more efficient. He saw an important role for the private sector in the endeavour and added that for any ICT initiative has to be sustainable, and it calls for private sector participation.

During the discussion session, **Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh** raised doubts about this model, especially the structuring and financing of the centres. His contention was that money flowing from the private sector will limit the delivery of social entitlements for which it is designed. He also felt that the model does not incorporate community control over these centres and will end up subsidising the private sector companies piggybacking on the centres.

Mr. Seán Ó Siochrú observed in another related context that the debate regarding CSCs is part of a much larger issue, the larger issue being the very definition of a social policy framework. He talked about the need to develop models where people can play an active role in governance. He was of the opinion that this is a gap that private sector could not really fill.

Mr. Ashok Krishnan cautioned against the notion of private sector participation in government services, especially the CSCs. With its concept of 'user-fees' and by virtue of it being the sole provider of government services, private sector participation can turn CSCs into a monopoly and harm the interest of rural communities.

In his presentation, **Mr. Sivasankar Nair** critiqued the CSC model. He was of the opinion that the CSCs lack an 'empowerment aspect'. This is because these centres follow an entrepreneurial model and there is no guarantee that the entrepreneur will

⁹ Bhoomi is an ICT project of the Government of Karnataka aimed at digitising land records. Please refer to <http://bhoomi.kar.nic.in/>

deliver on the social obligations which are an integral part of the centres. Rather there are more incentives to promote the products/services of private players at the cost of fulfilling social obligations. He also said that there is no component of community ownership in the entire model, which is worrying. He compared the CSC model with the Akshaya centres which even with an entrepreneurial model has a significant amount of community ownership and control woven into it.

Dr. Subhash Bhatnagar from Indian Institute of Management – Ahmedabad (IIM – A) opined that the NeGP is a 'conscious effort by the authorities not to prescribe to a centralised governance structure'. He added that the success/failure of the plan will largely be determined by the people who commission it at the district level. One of the good points of the plan is that it demands a basic minimum ICT infrastructure and a budgetary allocation for achieving connectivity. He said that the NeGP also has a strong emphasis on community capacity building, though this component needs to be sufficiently developed.

By and large it was felt that the current policy thrust in CSCs toward private-public partnership is not in keeping with governmental development priorities.

G. Region specific issues

G. 1. South Africa

In his presentation, **Mr. Mokwining Nhlapo** from the Government of South Africa dwelt on the efforts by the South African government to make the country self-reliant in ICTs and the information society. He said that the government has established a 10-year plan for integrated rural development with a focus on broadening participation and increasing competitiveness of the South African economy.

He added that policy development needs to be in line with technology, and at the same time ensure that regulatory mechanisms are put into place. He said that South Africa has embarked on a massive broadband initiative through the 'East Africa Submarine Cable' and that the government is developing local content. He was particularly concerned about the lack of software inter-operability within government departments and added that they are working on ways of resolving this issue.

G.2. China

Dr. Yuezhi Zhao from Simon Fraser University, Canada gave a critical analysis of the globalisation path undertaken by China. She talked about a state apparatus promoting 'a social policy framework that creates a digital revolution and necessitates social exclusion, which in turn becomes a social tension that the government has to control'. This includes developing media content and portfolio control in telecommunications, all with an aim to maintain some degree of national determinism. Ms. Zhao commented that the telecommunications revolution has occurred in such a way that it has benefited coastal communities where most of the Special Economic Zones are located. While China is a world leader in the export of electronic goods, this leadership position is created on the back of a system which promotes 'sweat-shop' culture, creating a large mass of people who create wealth and give rise to the middle-class, but who are themselves impoverished.

Both the presentations highlighted the efforts and struggle to create an information society appropriate to those nations. While the South African example dwelt into the efforts of a nation trying to build an information society. Dr. Zhao's presentation clearly brought out issues of distributional equity in the emerging information society that China is.

H. Conclusion

The workshop achieved a number of outputs.

Some of the key ideas that emerged during the three days include:

- In the context of India specifically, and also globally, there was a consensus amongst participants for an interface between information technologies and the RTI that can empower citizens, and move beyond a management information system approach. This systemic approach was seen as the embedded ways in which ICTs can enable citizen participation in governance, encouraging an open dialogue between citizens and government.
- Closely connected to the above, but from a global systemic point, what emerged from the workshop was a serious critique of the market framework of ICTD and the need to reclaim a social inclusion framework. This would entail having community participation not only at the level of project implementation in ICTD projects but also at project planning and design stages. The need to combine policy architecture at the top with local innovations around ground level possibilities was seen as the necessary two sides to an ICTD framework that can be empowering.
- Rural development was also seen as a priority area for social policy in respect of ICTs. The fact that on one side, decentralisation of government is bringing about structural changes, and on the other side, ICTs are creating their own structural changes in which there is potential for every villager to participate in government processes, was seen as implicative of questions regarding how to optimise these possibilities and ensure that rural government gets meaningfully restructured around new realities. If one department is set up to be the 'lead' department through which other line departments deliver their services, there could be immense scope for an integrated development agenda.
- Another issue which was discussed intensely was the launch of the 1,00,000 CSCs, by the Government of India. It was felt that the current policy thrust toward private-public partnership is not in keeping with development priorities.
- We at ITfC see this workshop as a starting point, a 'mother' workshop, that got participants thinking about policy areas within the ICTD discourse, deriving from the quintessential cornerstones of social justice and equity. This 'mother' workshop has thrown up ideas for smaller but more focused thematic workshops which will allow us to discuss and deliberate more sharply certain key themes.

I. Annexures

I.1. List of participants

Sl. No.	Participant Details	Sl. No.	Participant Details
1.	Dr. Amin Alhassan Assistant Professor, Division of Social Science, York University, Toronto, Canada.	2.	Ms. Anita Gurumurthy Executive Director, IT for Change, Bangalore, India.
3.	Mr. Ashis Sanyal Senior Director, Department of Information Technology, Government of India. New Delhi, India.	4.	Mr. Ashok Krishnan Vice President, National Institute for Smart Government, Hyderabad, India.
5.	Dr. Balaji Parthasarathy ICICI Chair & Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Information Technology – Bangalore, Bangalore, India.	6.	Dr. Basheerhamad Shadrach Asia Senior Program Officer IDRC, New Delhi, India.
7.	Mr. Bhupendra Badgaiyan UNDP Regional Centre, New Delhi, India.	8.	Mr. Chanuka Wattegama Programme Specialist – ICT4D, UNDP-APDIP, Colombo, Sri-Lanka.
9.	Dr. Devinder Sharma Chair – Forum for Biotechnology & Food Security, New Delhi, India.	10.	Mr. Gurumurthy Kasinathan Director, IT for Change, Bangalore, India.
11.	Ms. Gayathri Kalia Officer on Special Duty, National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, India.	12.	Ms. Jamuna Ramakrishna Programme Officer - Gender, Women & Development and ICT, Media & Knowledge Sharing, HIVOS India Office, Bangalore, India.
13.	Mr. Luthfulla Atheeq State Project Director – Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Department of Public Instruction, Government of Karnataka, Bangalore, India.	14.	Mr. M. Sivasankar Director of Education, Government of Kerala, Kerala, India.
15.	Dr. Michael Gurstein Executive Director, Centre for Community Informatics Research, Development and Training, Canada.	16.	Mr. Mokwining Nhlapo Chief Operations Officer, Presidential National Commission on Information Society and Development, Government of South Africa, South Africa.
17.	Mr. N. Shiv Kumar Chief Executive Officer, Swasti Health Resource Centre, Bangalore, India.	18.	Mr. Nikhil Dey Founding Member, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), Rajasthan, India.

19.	Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh Executive Director, IT for Change, Bangalore, India.	20.	Dr. Paula Chakravarty Assistant Professor, Communication Department, University of Massachusetts – Amherst, USA.
21.	Mr. Prabir Purkayastha Delhi Science Forum, New Delhi, India.	22.	Mr. R. Gopalakrishnan Joint Secretary, Prime Minister’s Office, New Delhi, India.
23.	Ms. Radhika Lal Policy Advisor – ICTs for Poverty Reduction & MDGs, UNDP, New York, USA.	24.	Dr. Rahul De Hewlett – Packard Chair Professor, Indian Institute of Management- Bangalore, Bangalore, India.
25.	Mr. Rajeew Sadanandan Ex-Secretary – Department of Health, Government of Kerala, Kerala, India.	26.	Mr. Rishab Aiyer Ghosh Senior Researcher, United Nations University – MERIT, Netherlands.
27.	Mr. Rodrigo Assumpção Assistant Secretary for Logistics and Information Technology, Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management, Government of Brazil, Brazil.	28.	Mr. Sanjay Jaju Municipal Commissioner – Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India.
29.	Mr. Seán Ó Siochrú Research Director, NEXUS Research, Dublin, Ireland.	30.	Dr. Shobha Raghuram Director, HIVOS – India Regional Office Bangalore, India.
31.	Ms. Soumya Kidambi Member – Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, Rajasthan, India.	32.	Ms. Sreela Sarkar PhD Student, University of Massachusetts – Amherst, USA.
33.	Ms. Srirupa Roy Senior Advisor – South Asia Program, SSRC, New York, USA.	34.	Dr. Subhash Bhatnagar Honorary Professor of Information Systems, Indian Institute of Management – Ahmedabad. India.
35.	Mr. Sudhir Krishnaswamy Senior Research Associate, IT for Change, Bangalore, India	36.	Ms. Swasti Paik Correspondent – CSDMS, India.
37.	Mr. T. Pradeep Founding Member, Samuha Bangalore, India.	38.	Mr. T. R. Raghunandan Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. New Delhi, India.
39.	Mr. Vickram Crishna Radiophony, Mumbai, India.	40.	Mr. Willie Currie The Association for Progressive Communications, South Africa.
41.	Dr. Yuezhi Zhao Associate Professor, School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, Toronto, Canada.		

I. 2. Agenda and programme schedule

DAY 1: 18th JANUARY 2007	
08.30 – 09.15	Registration
09.15 – 09.25	Introduction to the Workshop – Anita Gurumurthy, IT for Change, India
<p>SESSION I: Core Issues of Development: Making the ICT Connection</p> <p>This session will assess how the information society (IS) is impacting or can potentially impact core development domains - education, health, agriculture, livelihoods and employment, gender equality and community empowerment. It will proceed from examining chronic bottlenecks in these domains, and take a systems approach to explore the new possibilities presented by ICTs. For instance, the session will explore how ICTs can give a fillip to the right to information and people's struggles for entitlements and community monitoring of development delivery, as also facilitating new bottom-up knowledge systems, apart from specific opportunities in different development domains. The session will touch upon how some current policies and interventions with respect to ICTs are playing a strong role in reshaping development domains. Some of these changes are, however, attempting to displace tried and tested theories of development that lay stress on values of equity and social justice. How do we direct our policies to optimize the new possibilities for development? What correctives are required to existing ICT frameworks in health, education, agriculture and livelihoods, and how do we reframe the basic discourse to (explore and exploit) completely new development paradigms?</p>	
09:25 – 10.30	<p>Speakers:</p> <p>Radhika Lal – Policy Advisor, ICT for Poverty Reduction & MDGs, UNDP, USA Rajeev Sadanandan – Ex-Secretary, Department of Health, Government of Kerala, India Luthfulla K. Atheeq – State Project Director, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Department of Public Instruction, Government of Karnataka, India Chair –Shobha Raghuram – Director, HIVOS - India Regional Office</p>
10.30 – 11.00	Discussion
11.00 – 11.20	Tea & Coffee
11.20 – 12.20	<p>Ashis Sanyal – Senior Director, Department of Information Technology, Government of India Devinder Sharma – Food Policy Analyst & Chair - Forum for Biotechnology & Food Security, India N. Shiv Kumar – Chief Executive Officer, Swasti Health Resource Centre, India Chair –Vickram Krishna – Promoter, Radiophony, India.</p>

12.20 – 12.50	Discussion
12.50 – 14.00	Lunch at the venue
<p>SESSION II: Citizenship in the Information Society: Taking Stock</p> <p>This session focuses specifically on understanding how ICTs can be used to revitalize governance – both in its service delivery and participation aspects – from a citizen-centric perspective, and what policy lessons have emerged from early initiatives. It will seek to explore the ways in which national and state level policy instruments approach development and empowerment through e-governance. The specific implications for decentralized governance and ‘self-government institutions’ will also be examined.</p>	
14.00 – 15.00	<p>Speakers:</p> <p>Rodrigo Assumpção – Assistant Secretary for Logistics and Information Technology, Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management, Government of Brazil</p> <p>Nikhil Dey – Founding Member, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, India</p> <p>Gayathri B. Kalia – Officer on Special Duty, National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, Government of Andhra Pradesh, India</p> <p>Chair –Mokwining Nhlapo – Chief Operations Officer, Presidential National Commission on Information Society and Development, Government of South Africa</p>
15.00 – 15.25	Discussion
15.25 – 15.45	Tea and Coffee
15.45 – 16.45	<p>Ashok Krishnan – Vice President, National Institute for Smart Government, India</p> <p>T. Pradeep – Founding Member, Samuha, India</p> <p>Sanjay Jaju – Municipal Commissioner, Hyderabad, India</p> <p>Chair –Basheerhamad Shadrach – Asia Senior Program Officer, telecentre.org, IDRC, India</p>
16.45 – 17.40	Discussion

DAY 2: 19th JANUARY 2007	
SESSION III: ICTD Theory and Practice: The Global – Local Spectrum	
<p>This session will critique the evolution of ICT for Development (ICTD), as a domain of knowledge and practice, examining how development notions have been reconstituted in ICTD rhetoric. It will explore the public policy silences around issues of social justice and equity, raising some questions that link the global and the local. It will include an assessment of the global milestones in ICTD policy, and examine their implications for national policies in developing countries. The issues of multistakeholderism, policy roles of the business sector and issues of 'privatized governance' in the information society will be discussed, along with impact of these issues on development practice at local levels.</p>	
09:00 – 09:30	<p>Commentaries on the Day 1 Proceedings: Seán Ó Siochrú – Research Director , NEXUS Research, Ireland Parminder Jeet Singh – IT for Change, India</p>
	Speakers:
09:30 – 10:30	<p>Michael Gurstein – Executive Director, Centre for Community Informatics Research, Development and Training, Canada Chanuka Wattegama – Programme Specialist – ICT4D, UNDP-APDIP, Sri-Lanka Mokwining Nhlapo – Chief Operations Officer, Presidential National Commission on Information Society and Development, Government of South Africa Chair –Rodrigo Assumpção – Assistant Secretary for Logistics and Information Technology, Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management, Government of Brazil</p>
10:30 – 11:00	Discussion
11:00 – 11:10	Tea and Coffee
11:10 – 12:30	<p>Amin Alhassan – Assistant Professor, Division of Social Science, York University, Canada Paula Chakravartty – Assistant Professor Communication, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA Yuezhi Zhao – Associate Professor, School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, Canada Rahul De – Hewlett-Packard Chair Professor, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, India Chair –Willie Currie – The Association for Progressive Communications, South Africa</p>
12:30 – 13:00	Discussion

DAY 3: 20th JANUARY 2007	
<p>SESSION IV: ICT Requirements for a New Development Paradigm</p> <p>Technologies take the shape of the social vision of its designers. If ICTs have the promise to redefine development related systems, as they have redefined other social systems, what is the ICT vision required for this purpose? And what are its policy requirements? Before we determine the path of ICT deployment and the corresponding role of public policy, it is important to understand the central paradigms of these technologies. This session will examine the enabling context of ICTs in terms of its different aspects like connectivity, content, software and applications, and ICT-enabled services. It will analyze the dominant constructs of ICTs in comparison to some progressive possibilities, like 'open paradigms' (open access, open content, open source software). These possibilities, mostly anchored at present in the experience of the North, will be examined from a development lens.</p>	
09.00 – 10.20	<p>Speakers:</p> <p>Rishab Aiyer Ghosh – Senior Researcher, United Nations University – MERIT, Netherlands Prabir Purkayastha – Delhi Science Forum, India Vickram Crishna – Promoter, Radiophony, India Sudhir Krishnaswamy – IT for Change, India Chair –Michael Gurstein - Executive Director, Centre for Community Informatics Research, Development and Training, Canada</p>
10.20 – 10.50	Discussion
10.50 – 11.10	Tea and Coffee
11.10 – 12.10	<p>Willie Currie – The Association for Progressive Communications, South Africa Sowmya Kidambi – Member, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, India Seán Ó Siochrú – Research Director, NEXUS Research, Ireland Chair –Michael Gurstein – Executive Director, Centre for Community Informatics Research, Development and Training, Canada</p>
12.10 – 12.30	Discussion
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch at the venue

SESSION V: ICT: Towards a National Policy Framework on Development in the Information Society

This session will signal the key cornerstone aspects for institutionalizing a social policy approach to ICTD, rooted in the development context and experience of the South. It will raise the basic policy questions that concern ICTD, compare policy approaches, take stock of India's roadmap and argue for a strong and purposeful policy regime that will allow development priorities to be addressed in the myriad IS issues. The session will examine a social policy framework for ICTD in terms of cross-cutting policy issues, sectoral issues as well as implementation aspects.

13.30 – 15.10	<p>Speakers:</p> <p>Anita Gurumurthy – IT for Change, India T. R. Raghunandan – Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India M. Sivasankar – Director of Education, Government of Kerala, India R. Gopalakrishnan – Joint Secretary, Prime Minister's Office, India Chair –Subhash Bhatnagar – Honorary Professor of Information Systems, IIM Ahmedabad, India</p>
15.10 – 15.40	<p>Discussion</p>
15.40 – 16:00	<p>Tea and Coffee</p>
16:00- 16:30	<p>Open Discussion</p>
16:30 – 17:45	<p>Open discussion on Policy Priorities facilitated by : Parminder Jeet Singh – IT for Change, India Radhika Lal – Policy Advisor, ICT for Poverty Reduction & MDGs, UNDP, USA</p>

About IT for Change

IT for Change (ITfC) is a non-profit organisation based in India.

ITfC seeks to interpret the context and the opportunity of the new ICTs, and broadly, the emerging information society, through the lens of the global South. Our approach is guided by the ethical cornerstones of development – equity, social justice and empowerment.

We strongly believe in the need to emphasise the political narratives that are often sidelined in debates on the information society, which is largely being shaped by neo-liberal ideologies.

ITfC engages in research and advocacy, and field based projects that demonstrate innovative ICT possibilities.

For more information, please visit www.ITforChange.net

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