

# Annual Report 2009-2010



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*Front Cover: Sundramma of Attiguppe village, participating in her first community radio recording, listens to a playback of her voice*



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2009-2010

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# Acronyms

AWAKE	Association of Women's Entrepreneurs of Karnataka
BOOT	Build-Own-Operate-Transfer
CABE	Central Advisory Body of Education
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCID	Centre for Community Informatics and Development
CRP	Cluster Resource Person
CSC	Common Service Centres
DIET	District Institutes of Education and Training
DSERT	Department of State Educational Research and Training
FICCI	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry
FOSS	Free and Open Source Software
GAID	Global Alliance of ICTs and Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICTD	ICTs for Development
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IGC	Internet Governance Caucus
IGF	Internet Governance Forum
IKME	IKM Emergent
IP	Intellectual Property
IT	Information Technology
JoCI	Journal of Community Informatics
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MM	Mahiti Manthana
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSK	Mahila Samakhya, Karnataka
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NeGP	National e-Governance Plan
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation

NISG	National Institute for Smart Government
NMK	Namma Mahiti Kendra
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development
ONI	Open Net Initiative
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PSC	Public Software Centre
RTI	Right to Information
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
SIG	Special Internet Groups
SRTT	Sir Ratan Tata Trust
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
TCOL	Teachers Communities of Learning
TISS	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIGF	United Nations Internet Governance Forum
USRN	University School Resource Network
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
<i>Kishori</i>	Adolescent girl
<i>Sangha</i>	Collective or Self Help Group
<i>Sakhi</i>	Young woman who looks after the NMK



## Directors' Report

# Some Reflections on our Strategic Directions

IT for Change has been grappling with the epochal changes brought in by the information society. Information society describes a global context where a considerable part of social life is digitally influenced, if not mediated. The influence is direct and also indirect, impacting people and structures not directly in contact with the digital phenomenon. While we have tried to situate ourselves firmly upon the ideals of equity, social justice, democracy and development, it remains a constant challenge to find appropriate theoretical frameworks for our work. In the last five years, we have defined our analysis and work vis-à-vis the theme of 'An Information Society for the South'. This theme proceeded from the logic of the structural disadvantages that developing countries suffer from, and within these countries, the exclusions that marginalised sections are subject to. Since the dominant idea of an information society was typically a global construction, it was logical that we took the geopolitical axis of North-South as the principal anchor for developing our critique and articulating possible alternatives.

As we analysed and understood better the structural dislocations caused by the information society paradigm, we found that the challenges it presents are at an even more fundamental level of our social organisation. We had always associated the dominant paradigm of information society with neoliberalism. However, in its rapid ascent in the past couple of decades, neoliberal ideology has still remained a counter-force, even if an increasingly powerful one, in relation to basic social institutions, whether of democracy, welfarism, public life, education or media. In their essence, these institutions are still largely pre-neoliberal. For instance, even if corporate money is known to greatly influence political agendas, it is still a phenomenon looked down upon. We value the publicness of basic civic infrastructure, even as we witness and lament its growing privatisation. Libraries and schools as basic enterprises of the knowledge and socialisation of our civilisation are seen as public concerns, and most of us show some amount of disquiet at the growing proprietisation of knowledge and privatisation of education.

On the other hand, the institutional ecology of information society has very different fundamentals. The institutions of information society were born and took shape in a period of the rising influence of neoliberalism. The imprint of neoliberalism on the information society paradigm is so defining that there is a strong need to reformulate the content and nature of progressive advocacy and political activism in relation to this principal defining characteristic of the dominant version of information society. The anchor concept of such reformulation has to be 'democracy with social justice'. It is however significant to keep in mind that neoliberalism itself seeks legitimacy by claiming the idea of democracy for itself.

The only significant resistance to the dominant patterns of information society, so far, has been from techie-anarchists, who have rebelled against corporatist hegemonies

in the digital arena, often with significant success, as in the case of free and open software. However, as what Benkler describes as ‘the battle over the institutional ecology of the digital environment’ becomes more intense, larger alliances embedded in society’s political economy landscape have to be made, which often involves choosing between aligning with an ascendant global corporate power or building the collective strength of society’s public interest players, which includes the state. At this crossroad, their antipathy towards governments (even the more democratic ones) is so strong that techie groups have largely allowed themselves to be co-opted by corporates, rather than work with governments. Dominant corporatist structures of the emerging digital reality can only be confronted through an active collaboration of all public interest actors, building strategic partnerships despite and beyond their many differences.

Governments themselves have been lax in the articulation of public interest in the emerging information society for two principal reasons. They are often simply inadequate to the task of understanding and responding to the complex issues thrown up by rapid technological change. Also, they have been somewhat uni-focally fixated on the challenges that the new ICTs pose to the task of maintaining statist controls in society, to the prejudice of many other public interest issues that are implicated in the ongoing flux. In any case, ICT corporates, and generally the whole digital arena, are so globally organised that governments, especially those of developing countries, have very little real leverage over them. On the other hand, there is no global governance worth its name, except when required to push developed country interests. The interests of these countries, at present, seem to be served best by a *laissez faire* approach to the increasing corporate control of the digital arena.

Consequently, the emerging institutions of information society are almost all post-democratic. Built on neoliberal values of radical individualism and self interest, and post-modernist conceptions of absolute freedoms and anti-normativeness, digital reality is a strange new being. Simply through its claim of the technical equality of all users (defining human beings in their relationship to technology rather than vice versa), the post-democratic digital seeks to almost magically exhaust the project of social justice. Users, disembodied of all qualities other than what they themselves want to assume, taken to be interacting as equals in pursuit of glorified self-interest, and living among people of their own choosing, define a new post-human paradigm. As it greatly expands the technology-mediated private space, the negative impact of the digital on the concept of public is no less. The public is after all a negotiated common space, while the digital seems – only seems – to allow a choice of sociality which is entirely in the image of the self and the personal, and thus escapes the burdens of negotiation and accommodation. These latter social processes are inherent in the concept of the public, as constituting its political aspect<sup>1</sup>.

The sense of extreme empowerment that the digital provides is a chimera as far as most aspects of our lives are concerned. However, this sense has been used as a kind of ‘opium of the masses’ to dull them to the real, and tectonic, shifts of power which are taking place in favour of global corporates. This is the central phenomenon

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1 Politics is defined as the process by which groups of people make collective decisions.



constituting the rapid neoliberalisation of our societies. The Internet itself, which started as a public network in the hands of public institutions is increasingly dominated by a few proprietary applications like Google and Facebook, representing the privatisation of the erstwhile public territory of the Internet. Google is increasingly the world's library, and Facebook, its 'public' meeting place. Both these functions were traditionally public, but now take place within proprietary spaces, of which rent-seeking opportunities, rather than public interest, is the main structural principle.

It is obvious that this new 'reality' strongly mediated by the 'digital', presents a great challenge to constructions of democracy, social justice, public life and the public sphere. Since the virtual consists entirely of intangible informational exchanges, it may be tempting to conceive of it in terms of the historical continuity of the public sphere. The virtual does fundamentally reshape the public sphere. However, the form and substance of the virtual goes much beyond, to embed directly into, and transform, many other key institutions of democratic public life as well, defining new directions for our political future.

As a greater portion of our lives gets entangled with the digital/ virtual, the strong influence of the dominant ideology of information society is already directly evident in 'real' spaces, like those of everyday politics and of knowledge production and sharing. One striking example is the principle of multistakeholderism, most prevalent in ICT policy spaces, which, in practice, turns out to be a means for open and blatant involvement of big businesses in making policies in the ICT arena. In the yesteryears, this kind of thing used to be done through back-door lobbying. Similarly, in no other area is development research, or development NGOs, so openly backed by corporate money as in the field of ICTs for development. Such a degree of legitimisation of corporate power and its role in the socio-political aspects of our society is a uniquely information society phenomenon.

In this framing of the information society phenomenon as a set of diabolical challenges, one obvious question arises; whatever happened to talk of the great egalitarian and knowledge equalising potential of the Internet? What about the Internet's image as a possible weapon of people's power against tyrannical institutions? These opportunities still exist and there is yet hope for them to come true, at least partially. We are in times of great social disruption, which is both an immense challenge and perhaps an unprecedented opportunity.

Manuel Castells, whose trilogy on network society is considered one of the most definitive works in this area, in an interview, describes our civilisational dilemma as follows:

The problem with technology is: it reflects us and we are not really nice people, so if we're real nasty this technology is going to show it and produce many terrible consequences. If we address our psyche, our political institutions, our way of life and our relationship to nature, if we are able to change, then technology has incredible potential to empower us. So here is the problem: today we have the most extraordinary tools which can be either used to help us or to destroy us. Right now, we're doing the second. So, the crisis is not that we are collapsing, the crisis is that while we are having a very dynamic economy,

we are not integrating in this economy our societies, cultures and political institutions. It's this gap we're suffering as a crisis, at a moment that we should in fact be rejoicing.

It is true that already dominant forces have made early inroads in shaping the information society paradigm and are getting entrenched. On the other hand, progressive actors in civil society have still not even developed sufficient theoretical frameworks, much less alternative frameworks of practice. This is especially true for a Southern vision of an information society. A few dispersed efforts, while often ameliorating the damage, are as likely to be coopted by the strongly systemic onslaught of dominant forces, which look remarkably well-organised, if not by design, certainly by a keen recognition of common interests.

The Internet may still become the instrument of organising people's power and of the overthrowing of unjust systems and structures. But for this, the protagonists must learn to use the Internet to also build alternative institutions, as it is so often being used disruptively to challenge and bring down institutions.

The Internet does provide significant possibilities for ensuring transparency and accountability of institutions. In fact, it is the power of the Internet to induce extreme, and perhaps, unbearable transparency, and thus expose the gap between 'claiming to be' and 'doing', between norm and action, that has largely served to undermine traditional institutions that survived on managing this 'gap'. In the new information rich environment which makes older methods of deception ineffective, dominant groups require legitimisation of new 'enabling' means and practices. Replacing democracy with multistakeholderism as the principal political institution, especially at the global level, is a good example of such a process. Skillfully 'managing' some of the inherent tendencies of the emerging new 'public sphere' of the Internet, as have been briefly touched upon earlier, itself acts as the key means of such legitimisation. Since the sustained assault in information society on our institutions mostly builds on their existing weaknesses, which neoliberalism has been able to exploit, institutional reform becomes an even more urgent imperative today. This calls for a purposeful deployment of ICTs towards such institutional reform.

These were the insights that framed the directions of our soul-searching; we felt that the focus of our work needed to be at a more fundamental level - the concepts and practices of democracy and the boundaries between public/common and private/commercial, in the emerging information society paradigm. Positing the idea of citizenship as the primary basis of framing social membership in information society, and the concept of digital public for framing the spatiality of the digital realm, are two important anchors of the new conceptual framework that we are evolving in order to address the unique context and exigencies of our work.

Two broad areas are important for progressive forces to engage with in the new context. The first pertains to the way the socio-technical phenomenon of the Internet is shaping up. It is required to ensure that the Internet's architecture is as decentralised, open and empowering as possible for those at the peripheries, thus protecting it against strong efforts towards shaping it as an instrument of control and dominance, for the continued accumulation of economic, social, political and cultural capital. This

is largely the policy arena of Internet governance, which has to be complemented by the practice of empowering the peripheries – local communities using new technology to take control. Development of such practices require sufficient public funds to be invested into the area of community informatics.

The second area that requires urgent attention is institutional reform in areas of development, democracy and media, taking into account the vastly changed context of the information society. Fortunately, ICTs themselves provide a lot of new possibilities for far-reaching institutional reform in the desired directions.

IT for Change's work in 2009-10 was built on the above logic. On one hand, we worked in two cross-cutting areas of technical governance and community informatics, and on the other, engaged with intersections of ICTs with development domains like those of governance, education and gender equality.

One of the most important activities during the year was the conception of the term 'public software', ascribing virtues and values of publicness to software needed and used for public purposes. We found that public authorities often connected much more easily with the concept of public software than with Free and Open Source Software (FOSS), since it was defined from their standpoint of public service and public goods provision. The concept of public software was first used in a regional workshop on public software held in Bengaluru, in February 2010. In May 2010, at an international workshop co-hosted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Government of Kerala, the 'Kochi Declaration on Public Software' was adopted. We plan to work with our partner organisations to set up a Public Software Centre to stress the 'publicness' of software, and organise collaborations between the FOSS community and public officials for developing FOSS for public purposes.

A new project 'Gender and Citizenship in the Information Society', consisting of multi-country researches in the Asia-Pacific region, which has been in the pipeline for more than a year, has now been finalised for support by IDRC. The project will begin shortly with a call for proposals followed by an inception workshop. Another major research and advocacy project, 'ICTs for Governance Reform and Deepening Democracy in India', also developed and refined as an idea in the last year, is ready to commence with the support of Ford Foundation.

Technology standards are by definition supposed to be public and free. But not in the digital arena, where proprietary, royalty-based standards abound. Such standards provide opportunities for perpetual rent to global digital corporations. The Government of India came up with a good draft policy on 'open standards in e-governance'. However, under pressure from global digital corporations, the policy was significantly diluted to include royalty-based proprietary, as well as multiple standards. IT for Change and its partner organisations launched a strong advocacy campaign against this dilution of the draft policy. A major problem however was that most civil society organisations consider such issues too technical, and do not engage with them. In this context, we consider a significant achievement that we could convince the strong and influential civil society coalition 'Campaign for People's Right to Information' to write to the government against the dilution of the draft arguing that open standards were

essential for exercising the right to information. We also offered alternative text for the draft policy. Our campaign has achieved considerable success with a clear positive impact on the draft policy process.

Further, in the area of ICT governance, we continued to work towards ensuring that global Internet policies are made by legitimate and democratic public institutions, and not by private companies, or a group of powerful countries. We did some very focussed advocacy for strengthening United Nations (UN) based Internet governance related bodies over the last year. We also networked with developing country governments in this regard.

The issue of governance of ICTs, which is the global platform for knowledge transmission, is closely related to the increasingly exploitative global Intellectual Property (IP) regime. IT for Change attended an experts' meeting called by the Third World Network in Geneva, in September 2010, on pro-development IP policies. We were also part of a national level coalition that was formed in this area and met earlier this year in Delhi for their first meeting. IT for Change brought to this meeting the important perspective of how techno-social spaces of the Internet constitute the principal site of knowledge flows, asserting that civil society engagement with Internet governance was necessary to ensure a rich knowledge commons or public domain.

Our engagements with ICTs in the public education systems grew further this year. We were able to make significant progress towards the introduction of free and open software in the public education system in Karnataka, and advocated for the same with government officials of other states. Arguing for the centrality of the teacher in ICT-enabled education, and also the use of digital content which is non-proprietary and collaboratively produced through the involvement of teachers, we commenced a new project - 'Teachers Community of Learning' - in some government schools in Bengaluru.

We continued to present strong counter-views at the global and national level where the information society discourse continues to be dominated by neo-liberal approaches. We wrote a paper 'Open but not Public Membership in the Information Society as a Club Good', in response to a call for papers by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). We participated in the Second Harvard Forum on ICTs and Development, organised by IDRC and the Berkman Center, attended among others by Amartya Sen, where we presented a paper, 'Social Enterprise to Mobiles: The Curious Case of a Propped up ICTD Theory'. We were invited this year by the independent expert to the UN on cultural rights to inform her report to the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC), to which we contributed perspectives on how the information society context compounds the category of culture.

Our field unit, the Centre for Community Informatics and Development, while continuing its engagement with self-help groups of marginalised women using community radio, community video and community computing, started a new project, *Kishori Chitrapata* (Images by Adolescent girls), which seeks to use digital video technology for shaping new constructivist learning processes and for developing local gender-sensitive content. This project is being done in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) and its advocacy

aim is to provide new ICT-based constructivist learning models for the public education system and for government programmes targetting out-of-school adolescents.

Even as we face new winds in international development aid that have deprioritised ICT related funding, we continue to be convinced of the need for the continued strengthening of the niche that we work in - that of looking at structural changes brought in by the digital phenomenon, from the perspective of equity and social justice. Our work belongs to the category of development effort that addresses structural issues - systemic marginalisation, social and economic justice, and democracy. Within results based development management, such efforts are often sought to be reframed in the language of measurable goals. In our organisational practice, some of our efforts simply defy easy measurement. It is pertinent to note that our work by its very nature is 'meta' and 'systemic' across almost the whole spread of social change and development activity, which makes measurements even more difficult. Additionally, there is much innovation (and experimentation) required both at a theoretical level and practical-project level in our work assessment that may require very different, forward-looking frameworks. In this context, raising funds in an increasingly risk-averse development funding environment, remains a rather formidable challenge.

To end on an uplifting note, though: there is a Chinese wish 'may you live in interesting times'. This wish is certainly granted in IT for Change's work.

**Directors**  
***IT for Change***

# ICTs and Education

*Education is the sector of development where the highest early impact of ICTs is evident. Parents, even from poor households, are keen that their children should learn to use a computer, and state governments have been rolling out ICTs in school programmes, generally without much thought about the appropriate role of ICTs in education. Since the general assumption is that ICTs are best left to the private sector, ICTs in school programmes are mostly outsourced to private technology vendors. Rather than treating ICTs as a new form and space of regular pedagogy, they are taken to be a general purpose stand-alone skill, with few programmes going beyond building basic computer literacy. On the other hand, the interest of the large digital corporates in the public education system is understandable. It helps to 'catch them young', especially with regard to 'hooking' them to dominant proprietary software models. Educational content companies are interested in large captive markets for their proprietary products.*

*As software companies, for instance, offer their products at greatly reduced prices, or even free, and set up teacher training facilities, the idea is to capture the market, which because of the 'network effect' in digital space, mostly means that the market leader can quickly build an almost unassailable market share. This effect often makes the costs of opting out of a dominant system prohibitive, which sets the market leader in a position of almost perpetual rent seeking from user lock-in to its software or digital system. While appearing to subsidise important elements of public education, the concerned company profiteers through other targetted markets (which would include software for home use by the students, in post-school years and for households at large), and also subsequent sale of mandatory upgrades. Due to the lack of imagination among policy makers and strong and sustained lobbying by digital corporates, what should have been a new opportunity to use ICTs to shape participatory and collaborative processes of learning, which is the long held vision of our education policies, ICTs in schools programmes are becoming the route to privatising both content and pedagogy in the Indian public education system. Unfortunately, these programmes are now being quoted favourably to push wider processes of privatisation of education in India.*

In the area of education, IT for Change works at four levels. These are (1) research aimed at gathering evidence regarding the relative performances of different ICTs in education models (2) policy advocacy with education policy makers, (3) capacity building of educators and policy makers in alternative, more progressive, ICT in education models, and (4) taking up demonstration projects which show the appropriateness of such alternative models for the Indian public education system.

## Research

There is little research on the actual impact of ICT in education programmes on teaching-learning processes. The few studies which have been undertaken

suggest that while programmes have scored high on excitement due to the novelty and attraction of new ICTs, there is not much evidence of any positive pedagogical impact. To get a clearer understanding of the designs of

different programmes and their implications for learning, IT for Change conducted a study of the programmes in Karnataka (where the Build-Own-Operate-Transfer or BOOT model was adopted in the Mahiti Sindhu programme) and Kerala (which adopted an in-house model, relying on regular school teachers and teacher trainers of the education department). Our research shows that the Kerala programme effectively integrates computer learning with regular learning processes since the curriculum included software tools relating to regular subjects. It also focuses on the development of teacher networks and collaborative content creation processes, which support teacher professional development and ensures higher levels of teacher engagement. On the other hand, in the case of the BOOT model adopted by Karnataka, almost the entire programme is outsourced to technology vendors. The faculty provided by the vendor is usually a computer literate person with no background in education. The ICT programme and the outsourced faculty are not integrated with the mainstream school system, while the curriculum is restricted to teaching 'office suite' which may not be pedagogically very relevant. It was found that this programme was unable to make any significant impact on teaching-learning processes and outcomes.

We prepared a policy brief based on our research paper, which was disseminated to education departments across the country. A film capturing the experiences and perspectives of the different actors and stakeholders in the Kerala programme was also produced. IT for Change conducted a workshop for the education department of the state of Himachal Pradesh presenting our research

on different 'ICT in education' models. The research findings were also shared at a national level seminar on 'Globalisation and Challenges to Contemporary Educational Systems - Role of ICTs', organised by the University of Hyderabad.

We also carried out another study of ICT in education programmes for the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) in Yadgir, one of the most backward districts of Karnataka, covering computer, radio and satellite/TV based programmes in government schools. The study indicated that though many teachers have looked positively at ICT possibilities, centralised design of programmes reduces ownership and commitment of schools and teachers. The study also noted an absence of a focus on the curriculum and the lack of teacher capacity building and participation. These factors contributed to rather sub-optimal outcomes for these programmes. The potential of ICT tools to support



*Children watching an educational TV programme in a government school in Yadgir, Karnataka*

information sharing as well as collaboration amongst teachers is immense, but programmes need to be driven by clear educational perspectives as well as focus on local contexts and priorities. SRTT is contemplating a holistic and long term school development

A study of two large-scale 'ICTs in School Education' programs of two neighbouring states of India brings on some interesting insights. The integrated model followed in Kerala since IT@School programs, where the accent is on developing systemic in-house capabilities anchored around the role of school teachers, has shown considerable success. This has been in terms of much higher level of teacher engagement, integration of computer learning with regular learning processes, greater per-learner availability of computers, significant cost efficiencies and development of teacher networks and collaborative content creation processes, which support teacher professional development. All of these together have led to the overall strengthening of the education system and better learning outcomes.

The alternative model of outsourcing or 'BOOT' employed by the Mahatma Jyoti Baबा program in the state of Karnataka, where private vendors were paid to run the program, does not show such positive outcomes. Funds were spent on vendor payments instead of building in-house capacities and hence the system itself did not benefit from the program outlay, and is largely unable to sustainably sustain the program beyond the BOOT period. Such outsourcing also seems to build in-house or learner permanent dependencies of the public education system on private players, which is significantly distinct pedagogical structures in critical ways.

The implications of this study for policy are critical. The IT@School model that demonstrated the advantages of developing competencies and local in-house capabilities in ICT Education. However, if due to some contextual reasons, it is at all found necessary to consider some degree of outsourcing, such decisions need to clearly distinguish between those processes such as procurement, installation and maintenance of hardware, and one-on-one activities with direct pedagogical implications like content and in-class, teacher training and learning processes, and limit outsourcing to the former.

**ICTs in School Education – To Outsource or Not**

This policy brief is based on our study of two large-scale 'ICTs in School Education' programs for high school students (Classes VIII-X) of two neighbouring states of India, Karnataka and Kerala. The study specifically addresses the key question of whether or not outsourcing activities or to invest in developing in-house processes and competencies within the school system.

**The Outsourcing Model**

The state of Karnataka, like a few other states in India, has tried the outsourcing model for ICT in school programs, called Mahatma Jyoti Baबा. This model relied on private vendors who are primarily in the business of selling computer hardware (software or services) to run the entire program. Typically, students learn directly on

the computers, facilitated by support staff provided by the vendors, with teachers playing a minimal role. One consequence of this was that the teachers themselves had limited opportunities to learn and hence were not able to guide the learning process of the students in any meaningful manner.

Some methods were readily followed in such models, and their outcomes, are

programme for the district. In our report detailing the outcomes of the study, we have also proposed a plan of action for using ICTs for supporting processes of teaching-learning and teacher professional development.

**Advocacy and Networking**

purely techno-economic thrust of the first draft. We have sent our comments on the second draft as well. (The two drafts, and our comments can be viewed at <http://www.itforchange.net/edu-ict/74-edu-and-icts/281-npise.html>)

Our research suggests that the privatisation of curriculum and pedagogy through BOOT models is inimical to the future of our public school system. However, as we had feared, the 'apparent' success of BOOT models in ICT and education initiatives (which our research findings contradict) was cited to justify a new draft policy on 'Public Private Partnerships in school education', released by the MHRD in October 2009. This draft policy proposes a new model in India's public education system whereby business entities will be encouraged to run schools using government funding and infrastructural support. IT for Change, along with other organisations, held three workshops, in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore, during October-November 2009, to discuss this draft policy. IT for Change's earlier mentioned research on ICT in education highlighting the drawbacks of PPP models, documented experience in other countries that point to the dangers of privatising school education, and the learnings from PPPs in other domains of public policy were discussed at these workshops and feedback shared with MHRD. <http://www.itforchange.net/edu-ict/74-edu-and-icts/239-ppp-workshop.html>

The ICT-education-india googlegroups, a mailing list coordinated by IT for Change, continues to be an active online discussion space and network for educationists. During 2009-10, the network undertook two important advocacy activities relating to ICTs in education – a review of the revised ICTs in education policy draft of MHRD and

*Policy brief prepared on the basis of our research study of the Kerala ICT@School programme*

During 2008-09, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) initiated a drafting group for a proposed 'ICT in schools' policy which was dominated by private companies with a direct stake in the proposed policy, and barely any educationists. As expected, the outcome of this drafting process was a document that gave primacy to the views of technology vendors, ignoring educational contexts and aims. IT for Change organised a strong advocacy campaign involving prominent educationists challenging the draft policy, and the compromised process of drafting the policy. Our advocacy effort helped in stopping what was in effect an outsourcing of policy making, through a directive from the MHRD Minister to that effect. During 2009-10, MHRD came out with a revised policy draft, which was significantly different from the first draft. It incorporated many of the comments and suggestions that we had made in response to the first draft. Though the second draft also has limitations, such as its promotion of Public Private Partnership (PPP) models in education, the emphasis of the new draft on social development, the role of teachers, and processes of collaborative curriculum design and development, are significant improvements over the

Positively, in my capacity I will bring awareness about public software in the (education) department.

Mr. S.R.S. Nadhan,  
Deputy Director of Public Instruction, Bengaluru, Karnataka



providing inputs to the ministry (mentioned earlier), and writing to the Government of Maharashtra protesting against its intention to enter into an MoU with a vendor of a dominant proprietary software system, whereby government school teachers would only be taught about its proprietary software and would be required to teach the same to their students. IT for Change drafted a letter, endorsed by sixty-four prominent educationists, including the Chairperson of the National Focus Group on Educational Technology, highlighting the pedagogical drawbacks of such an approach. The representation urged the state government to ensure that the ICT curriculum conforms to the principles enshrined in the National Curricular Framework 2005, which stresses constructivist approaches, which are not possible using closed proprietary software applications. Building on its work as a part of this network, IT for Change is now a member of the Comparative Education Research Group, India, (comprising some eminent academics involved in the area of education) as a part of which we propose to undertake further research relating to ICTs and education.

## Capacity Building

During the year, ITfC and other organisations formed a consortium to conduct a pilot training programme for high school teachers in government schools in Bengaluru, where the ICT@Schools programme had been implemented. Though the ICT@Schools programme is on FOSS platforms, in the absence of teacher capacity building, it was largely restricted to the vendor

faculty, teaching basic computer literacy to students directly.

ITfC training for the teachers on these FOSS platforms was well received, debunking myths that teachers are unable or unwilling to learn ICTs. These programmes also helped us to develop a better understanding of teacher needs and expectations. Teachers are keen to learn computers and adapt it in teaching-learning, however vendor driven models bypass teachers. Likewise, teacher educators<sup>2</sup> who are responsible to provide academic support to teachers or monitor the programmes are not able to do so, since they are also left out in the outsourced model. While many of the DIET faculty are inhibited when it comes to using computers due to a high degree of unfamiliarity, such inhibitions would make the adoption of ICTs by teacher educators, and their support to teachers on ICT based learning in schools, difficult. Based on our request to DSERT to build the capacity of teacher educators, and based on feedback from the successful pilot, DSERT invited the consortium to train DIET faculty on the same platform so that they could, in turn, train other school teachers across the state. Approximately a hundred DIET faculty across Karnataka were trained to install and use FOSS platforms and tools and also provided CDs with actual software resources (this is not possible with proprietary software) and many of the DIET faculty were able to install the same in their offices. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) provided support including computer lab facilities and DSERT coordinated the programme along with the Policy Planning Unit of the education department.

It was a meaningful interaction both pre-workshop and during the workshop. The effort various organisations and persons have made towards public software is inspiring.

*Dr. Nutan Bharati, NIIT  
University in Neemrana,  
Rajasthan*

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2 From the academic support institutions at district (DIET), block (BRC) and cluster (CRC)

For the first time in my 15 years endeavour, I find a group which is truly committed to India's interest (vis-à-vis the government's software policies).

*Mr. C. Umashankar,  
Commissioner for  
Small Savings, Tamil Nadu*

These two capacity building programmes prove that there is no need for the education system to depend on technology vendors for organising capacity building on ICTs and once the basic infrastructure of computer labs is created, the department can organise a large number of capacity building programmes internally.

## Demonstration Project

Along with conducting research, policy advocacy and capacity building, IT for Change has felt the need to design and implement a pilot project which uses ICTs in ways that would best address various educational priorities in a forward-looking and visionary manner. One such pilot project called 'Teachers Communities of Learning' (TCOL) is being implemented by IT for Change in 30 government schools in one block in Bengaluru, supported by Edukans, a Dutch organisation, through their local

representative, Development Focus. This programme focuses on two critical components; (1) building a network of government school teachers, focusing on their professional developmental and motivational needs, and (2) collaborative design and development of digital learning resources, using FOSS educational software tools.

a progressive educationist about the potential of ICTs has largely been countered as they are increasingly aware and concerned about the dangers of proprietisation of curricular and pedagogical processes through BOOT models of ICT education. Governments have become more open to FOSS, in many cases, retreating from their earlier claims over the years of being 'neutral' to different software models, acknowledging that free sharing of software and other digital resources is aligned to the principles and needs of the public education system. A large group of individuals and organisations across the country have come together in formal and informal ways to promote the adoption of pedagogically appropriate ICT models that favour systemic teacher development and the use of FOSS tools. It may however still be a long way to go before these new notions displace the mainstream thinking in education and ICT departments of most states in India that still consider outsourcing to 'computer specialists' inevitable.

The Karnataka education department has decided to focus on teacher capacity building through teacher educators who are part of the education system, emphasising computer-aided learning instead of just computer learning, and using of FOSS educational software tools. This shift draws from our Kerala study as well as from the pilot capacity building programme that we have been conducting in Karnataka. IT for Change will continue to work with the local network of organisations, both teacher education institutions and FOSS NGOs and communities, to support this new direction that the Government of Karnataka is taking. We will conduct state level trainings in computer literacy and computer aided learning to create a resource base of master trainers in the



*Capacity building for  
government school  
teachers*

## Looking Ahead

A combination of IT for Change's research, policy advocacy, networking, capacity building and demonstration projects has started to build a new and favourable discourse around the use of ICTs in education. The skepticism of many

Department of Education, Karnataka, who in turn can train teachers through a cascade model. This programme will also help in creating a local pool of teacher educators who have expertise on computer-aided learning.

IT for Change will continue to study ICT in education programmes, including evaluating a project of the 'University School Resource Network' (a collaborative programme of Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University with government and private schools and teacher education institutions in Delhi) that aims to build networks of teachers in these different institutions—schools, DIETs, colleges, universities and NGOs—for supporting their professional development and creating learning resources based on their experiences. The project presents a new model for self-paced and self-directed teacher professional development, which is a refreshing contrast to traditional top-down in-service teacher training programmes. This project uses a web portal ([www.EIEdu.net](http://www.EIEdu.net)) as a platform for its knowledge construction and sharing processes.

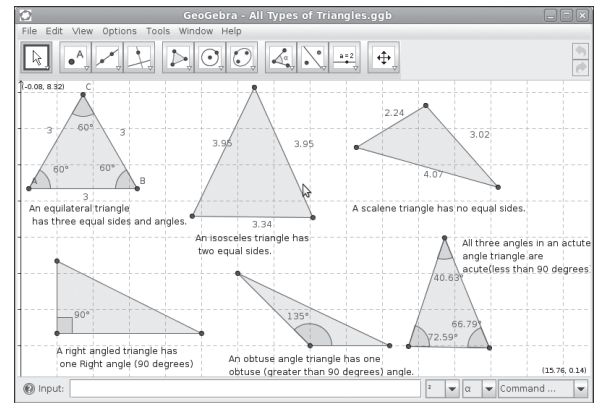
Partly due to our advocacy efforts, the Central Advisory Body of Education (CABE) of the Government of India recently discussed the issue of ICTs in education, and decided to set up a sub-committee to evolve guidelines with respect to programmes in this area. The lack of appropriate guidelines or frameworks has resulted in several state governments embarking upon poorly conceptualised and designed programmes.

IT for Change will support a 'demonstration project' in Yadgir district of Karnataka, as a part of the Kalike Samruddhi Upakram (Learning Enhancement Initiative) of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT), which will aim to work

on processes of teacher professional development through ICTs. It will also contribute to the design and implementation

of existing ICT programmes in schools in Yadgir. This proposed new project, along with the TCOL demonstration project in Bengaluru, aims to build on-line communities of teachers to enable them to network, share resources, seek assistance and voice their opinions on education programmes and policy. These projects also aim to introduce teachers to possible ways of effectively integrating ICTs in their regular classroom transactions to enhance the quality of the teaching-learning process, by making lessons more engaging, active and connected to real life. The larger and long-term objective of the project is to support the professional development of teachers and foster their ownership vis-à-vis the public education system. This should help them see themselves as active contributors to the much-needed overall renewal of the government school system. The outcomes of the project will be used for advocacy not only in the area of ICTs and education, but also vis-à-vis the overall role of teachers in education programmes.

During the coming year, we plan to further share our learnings from the Kerala 'ICT in schools' programme, the New Delhi based University School Resource Network (USRN) network, discussed earlier, and also from our demonstration projects, to promote pedagogically relevant ICT models with various state governments. The Governments of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have shown some interest in exploring new models of 'ICTs in schools' and we will maintain our advocacy efforts with these states.



*FOSS educational software 'Geogebra' being demonstrated in a training session*

# Feminist Frameworks in Information Society

*The gender discourse in relation to ICTs has been caught in an impasse-feminists from the South believe it to be part of a fringe arena dealing with methodologies of practice. Of course, more and more southern feminists are able to see the potential of technology for building alliances and networking, again, as a tool that has enabled a new means to connect. It is not as if these perceptions are incorrect. But there is in this analytic, a tendency to ignore the more structural and theoretical frameworks that can recast in feminist understanding the 'ICTs as tools' approach into 'the information society as a paradigm' approach. The work that is underway in the field, initiated by feminist actors who want to interpret ICTs and enable civil society to appropriate its power is indeed invaluable. But what we have been trying to do is to create a simultaneous appreciation of how ICTs are not just tools or artefacts but a phenomenon that can transform social institutions and processes. We want to be able to show how just like globalisation is used by feminists as a category of analysis, information society too needs to be one such epistemological category. This shift in perspective that we have attempted has been through many strategies - from writing think-pieces, giving talks and doing research to simply engaging with people one on one. The need to reinvigorate older development debates by subjecting them to fresh analysis in relation to the emerging techno-social order and its dominant ideologies of market fundamentalism and libertarian individualism cannot be overemphasised.*

In the arena of change-making, visioning a strategy that has the backing of a sound theory needs more than goal-setting for the future. It requires a solid appraisal of the present and an entrepreneurial instinct to negotiate the tiny twists and big turns to get to the future. Our work in the area of gender has entailed theory-building and research as well as the design and practice of feminist approaches to doing development work with technology. While our attempt to see the parts that make the whole is an exercise that began a few years ago, we intensified our effort to create credible strategies that correspond to a southern framework on information society and women's citizenship during this year.

## Research

### ***Gender and Citizenship in the Information Society Programme***

IT for Change, with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), geared up this year to institute a small grants programme to support creative research projects across Asia that address the question of women's citizenship in information society. The

year saw the fine tuning of the proposal to IDRC and the designing of the contours of the programme. Processes and structures were set up to launch the programme, which is one of the vital pieces of our universe of ideas and actions on feminist frameworks, a piece that provides the grounded analytical anchor. The programme will be called 'Gender and Citizenship in the Information Society' (Citigen, in short),

and it seeks to bring together a group of researchers and organisations who can engage with questions of gender and the digital public from their own contextual motivations. The programme is, for us, a means to influence the policy and practice discourses in the realm of ICTs and development. Gender will be employed as a lens to explore what has predominantly been a patriarchal and neo-liberal economic narrative and to discover the meanings reflecting the social membership of the marginalised in the new social realities co-constructed by digital technology. We do hope Citigen will broaden the conceptual horizon in the field of gender and ICTs by politicising the 'access-centred' approach that glosses over the relations of power mediating access and the complex ecology of actors controlling the techno-social space. Citigen will frame information society membership through the core feminist questions of power, justice and equity.

### Research study of Mahiti Manthana

IT for Change's Centre for Community Informatics and Development (CCID) continues to work with *Mahila Samakhya* Karnataka and its *sangha* women, giving *Mahiti Manthana* a continuity beyond the duration of its funding by the Government of India and UNDP. We have been working towards enabling *Mahila Samakhya* to set up systems to become more autonomous with their ICT pathways through *Kelu Sakhi*, our radio programme, *sangha-shaale*, our video based platform and *Namma Mahiti Kendra*, our rights based approach to community telecentres. The context of our work has needed a rigorous review through qualitative research, the design of which has been a crucial priority through this year. We came up with the key research questions and have been working on the design through consultative processes that have

involved the entire team. We propose to look at various feminist theoretical frameworks combining the conceptual elements of the public sphere, empowerment, knowledge and organisational change, for our inquiry and analysis. The coming year will see the data collection and writing. We are obviously very excited to get to this phase of what started off as a tentative exploration of a practice-based idea.

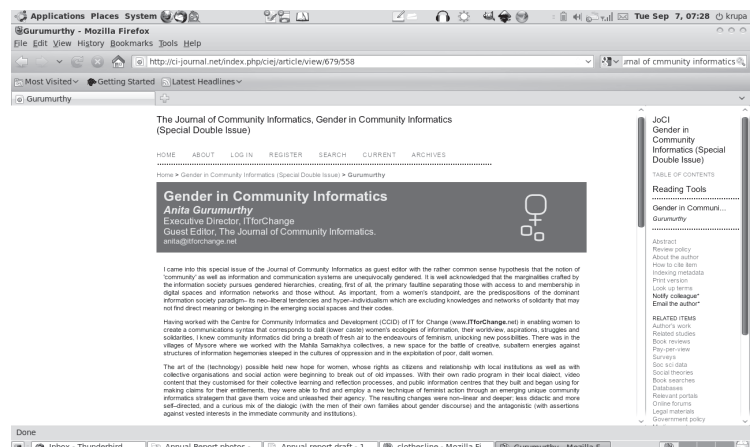
### The Journal of Community Informatics - Special Issue on Gender

IT for Change was invited to guest-edit a special issue on gender and community informatics by the *Journal of Community Informatics* (JoCI), which is a focal point for the dissemination of research on informatics and development among a global network of academicians, community informatics practitioners and national and multi-lateral policy makers. For us, the intersection between gender and community informatics has been intimately linked to our experiences with *Mahiti Manthana*, our field project. This special issue of JoCI has held a lot of learning for us. The articles in this issue address how information and communication technology has transformed gender identities and carry perspectives from across the world. The special issue explored a variety of topics ranging from e-governance approaches

For years, IT for Change has been at the forefront of linking Information Society concerns with gender equality and social justice concerns. In a nutshell, all of the core concepts evoked by "gender and citizenship in Information Society" - publics, human rights, governance - are crucial in theoretical as well as political terms, and all are currently in flux and require close scrutiny, particularly so from the vantage point of gender. I am very much looking forward to the findings produced through IT for Change's initiative regarding the Asian region.

Heike Jensen, Ph.D.,  
Postdoctoral researcher and  
lecturer, Department of  
Gender Studies of Humboldt  
University, Berlin, Germany

Editorial page of the  
special edition of  
*Journal of Community  
Informatics* edited by IT  
for Change



I would like to congratulate you for a brilliant special issue on gender and CI on the JoCI. Your editorial was one of the best texts that I have read on feminism in general and gender and CI in particular.

*Liisa Horelli, Adjunct professor, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Helsinki University of Technology, Finland*

and gender-based exclusions, virtual spaces that nurture solidarity and collective identity, mobile phone units that empower women's entrepreneurship, and migrant women's ICT based interactions to examine the relationship between community informatics and gender dynamics. We completed our work for the journal this year and feel that the entire project has been a useful way to grasp the specifics of gender politics within fluid techno-social realities. See (<http://ci-journal.net/index.php/ciej/issue/current>).

## Advocacy

One of our most satisfying experiences this year has been in the area of alliance-building with feminist actors – local and global. With feminist groups like Vimochana and Jagori, we have worked to build the capacity and awareness among civil society scholars and activists to interpret information society changes through structural analyses. We co-organised consultations and seminars around new media, new technology, gender and development. These efforts presented organisations and activists with new tools and categories to reflect upon and understand change processes with their gendered implications at macro levels and in their continuities with micro realities. We have engaged with academic institutions through lectures and debates that allow a re-examination of the current priorities in relation to the structural changes of information society and the crisis of categories for feminist intervention.

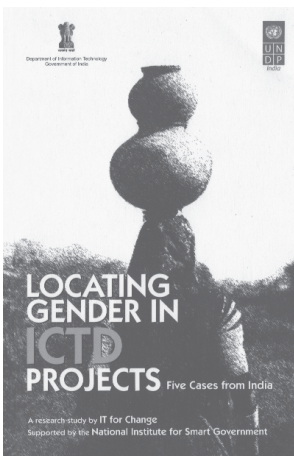
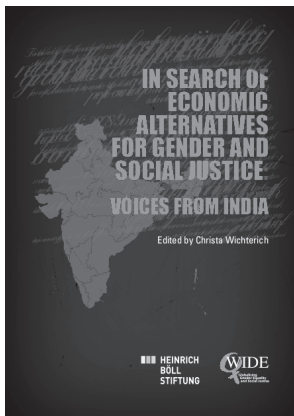
(See for example, <http://www.itforchange.net/gender/72-gender/252-it-for-changes-gender-program-in-malaysia-.html>)

Given the rich tradition of southern scholarship on gender and development in India, the inroads our work has made

into southern feminist framework building initiatives is a testimony to the resonance that our theoretical approaches have with political thinking among veterans in the field. We wrote a piece for a book titled, 'In Search of Economic Alternatives for Gender and Social Justice: Voices from India', an Heinrich Böll Foundation initiative. Our article, 'Reclaiming Development in the Information Society', argued how feminist analysis must focus on the spaces of resistance to transnational capital accumulation in information society, by emphasising the collaborative over the competitive. (<http://www.itforchange.net/gender/72-gender/263-voices-india.html>)

Last year, we elaborated a policy framework on gender and ICTs based on a citizenship approach for the UN's Global Alliance on ICTs and Development (GAID). We were able to continue refining this approach to examine debates on Internet Governance along the lines of citizenship. We organised a workshop on this theme at the UN's Internet Governance Forum (UNIGF), held in Egypt in November 2009, inviting scholars and activists to explore the intersections between citizenship, gender and the Internet ([www.itforchange.net/gender/72-gender/245-igf2009.html](http://www.itforchange.net/gender/72-gender/245-igf2009.html)). National ICTD agencies like the National Institute for Smart Government (NISG), have called upon our gender-related expertise, and we were able to publish this year, the research supported by NISG to engender national ICTD programmes through policy interventions (<http://www.itforchange.net/gender/72-gender/262-gender-in-ictd.html>).

We contributed a commentary to the *Economic and Political Weekly's* September 2009 issue in an attempt to advance the



policy debates around gender and ICTs. We argued that policies on gender need to avoid a paternalistic and alarmist tendency that treat the techno-social space as essentially dangerous and that policy makers must look at laws and policies in a holistic way to ensure the citizenship and capability rights of women.

Mainstream development agencies are now waking up to the implications of information society analyses. The UN's regional commission for the Asia-Pacific, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), invited us to give expert comments on Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action towards the upcoming Beijing plus 15 review in 2010. Our paper for ESCAP ([www.itforchange.net/media/The\\_Information\\_Society\\_Context-Paper\\_for\\_UNESCAP%20.pdf](http://www.itforchange.net/media/The_Information_Society_Context-Paper_for_UNESCAP%20.pdf)) has been widely acclaimed by feminist groups for breaking new ground on media, violence, ICTD and access to knowledge. The BRIDGE group at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Sussex, invited us to talk about e-governance and technology governance in a seminar on gender and governance. These invitations from different agencies to expand the gender and development analyses and discussions has been an encouraging indicator of our impact.

## Looking Ahead

The research programme on 'Gender and Citizenship in the Information Society' that we have just launched is an effort to bring together a small community of researchers who can use the lens of citizenship to study information society from a gender and development perspective. The coming year will see an intensive engagement with this programme, the setting up of the research network and the ongoing advocacy through it.

In the months ahead, we plan to focus on data collection in Mysore, to study our intervention through *Mahiti Manthana*. We look forward to investigating the way our experiment has intertwined with the market-led diffusion of ICTs on the ground, and to be able to comment on what we did and how our efforts to approach technology use in a self-reflexive and feminist way may have created a different dynamic of community informatics.

For a few months, we have been discussing a partnership with Dr. Lisa McLaughlin from Miami University-Ohio, to undertake research with a political economy framework on 'Women's Enterprise and Information Technology'. We begin the coming year with the data collection for this research. We will explore ICT policies and practices that seek to integrate women entrepreneurs, especially from the informal and small business sectors, into formal and global markets, looking at both women in IT businesses and women using IT for their businesses. Three sites have been selected for the research - Karnataka, Kerala and Gujarat. In Karnataka, we will meet women entrepreneurs supported by an NGO called the Association of Women's Entrepreneurs of Karnataka (AWAKE) that works with women from across different social backgrounds to set up and run small enterprises. In Kerala, we will study the efforts of the IT Mission and Kudumbashree programme (both are initiatives of the Government of Kerala), looking at how ICT-based entrepreneurship schemes have been functioning and whether and how it empowers women. We also want to study how the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the women's trade union in Gujarat, has deployed ICTs to support their women members.

Often enough the topic of gender and ICTs is only seen from a rather instrumental perspective, but this panel stepped away from that commonplace to ask a much deeper question: How is internet empowering women's citizenship? In our patriarchal reality we rarely think of women as active citizens, with power and the will to participate in shaping the world.

*Margarita Salas, Founder of Sulá Batsú Cooperative, Co-hosted the workshop 'The Internet and Citizenship: Applying a Gender Lens' with IT for Change at the IGF 2009 Meeting in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt*

# ICTs for Deepening Democracy

*Democratic governance seems to increasingly be in the eye of a storm as marketisation of social processes systematically squeezes out the political space for collective decision making and implementation. ICTs have been used in dominant e-governance models to promote managerial approaches seeking privatisation (or outsourcing) of as many governance functions as possible and constructing the state-citizen relationship more or less uni-dimensionally as that of a service provider and consumer. ICTs are therefore seen primarily to be in a system-management role and not so much as a possibility for people's empowerment or for democratisation of the polity. In this light, it is hardly surprising that the e-governance programmes of governments often run quite contrary to the letter and spirit of other initiatives for governance reform aimed at deepening democracy like decentralisation, community monitoring and the right to information. IT for Change has attempted to advocate alternative models of ICTs for governance reform that prioritise citizenship rights of the people, while improving efficiencies and management aspects of governance.*

During 2009-10, the main activities at IT for Change in this thematic area consisted of wrapping up of our project on 'Active Disclosure and the Internet' as part of the global Open Net Initiative project, field research on the Common Service Centres programme of the central government, and the development of a proposal for a two year research and advocacy project on 'ICTs for Governance Reform' which commences in mid 2010.

## Research

### ***Open Net Initiative***

IT for Change is a part of the Open Net Initiative (ONI) of the International Development Research Centre, Canada. The key focus of this network is to study censorship and surveillance processes in different countries. However, in interpreting the basic spirit of openness of the Internet as a space for the free flow of information, we focussed on the right to information through digital channels. The main contention here was: since much of government information today is stored digitally, it can be made universally accessible at almost no cost. Therefore, all public information unless expressly exempt under the Right to Information (RTI) Act needs to be made available to all through digital channels.

Unlike government records on paper, where there is a cost involved in making this information available, in the case of digital records, all the information can be instantaneously published at almost no cost by connecting it to the public Internet. Not publishing such information in fact amounts to censorship of public information by the state. Significantly, proactive disclosure is an important part of India's RTI Act.

As a part of our research, during 2008-09, we had undertaken a study on the role of ICTs in facilitating public monitoring of governmental welfare programmes. This study was situated in the context of the implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It explored whether the putting up of crucial and

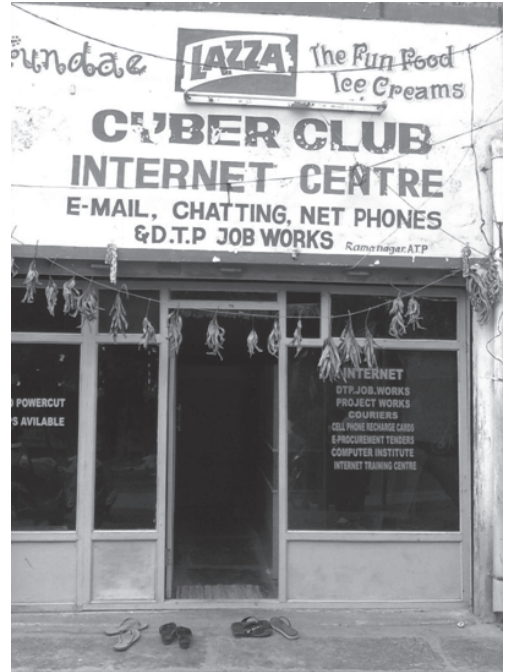


relevant public information on the Internet, which has a direct bearing on social and economic development, makes the Internet more relevant to people's lives and results in its greater use. Our study revealed that there is significant awareness among community members that information about NREGA is being provided through the Internet. Though most of the wage seekers under NREGA are illiterate and too poor to be able to access the Internet by themselves, they do so through Community Based Organisations (CBOs) working in their area. For CBOs, using and interpreting information about the programme to wage seekers has become an important part of their work in the community.

During the year under review, we conducted a study on 'proactive disclosures' by different departments of the Government of Karnataka. We interviewed government officials on proactive disclosures through the Internet in compliance with the Right to Information Act. We found that government officials largely agree that public information must be pro-actively disclosed in digital form through the Internet and are quite conscious of the huge pressures of a 'reactive' RTI administration, wherein each RTI request is separately and individually responded to. However, officials do not have any clear ideas about the kind of systems and processes that could ensure such proactive disclosure. The challenge is therefore not technological (since almost all government departments have websites and almost all documents are digitised), but governance reform related, involving the development of new processes and systems in the administration.

### Community Service Centres

IT for Change undertook field research in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat to assess the working of Common Service Centres (CSCs), which are being put up under the central government's flagship National e-Governance Plan (NeGP). Research revealed that though the NeGP website made claims of having covered a good part of rural India through these centres, there was not much to show on the ground. While delays vis-à-vis issues connected to infrastructure and development of services are perhaps understandable, what was problematic was that the CSC's corporate-franchisee based system for delivering public services appears to be in complete disarray. There was little recognition among designated franchisees about their expected responsibilities in terms of public service delivery. Neither did there seem to be any connection of the proposed delivery system to local CBOs and local self governance bodies. On the ground, it appeared that CSCs were largely still an idea (even if computers had arrived at some places, although often still unpacked), the precise contours of which no one had any grasp of – neither the community, nor the franchisee, nor the intermediary corporate body nor government officials. Everyone seemed to be looking to the other for getting things going. We also saw that the expectations of each



*Shared Access to Internet: Telecentre in Anantapur District in Andhra Pradesh, visited as a part of our CSC research study*



*Rural-e-Seva telecentre  
in Andhra Pradesh,  
visited as part of our  
CSC study*

group from CSCs were so hugely different that it appeared that going forward would be difficult. This initial research will be followed up by more field visits in the coming year to assess progress of the CSC scheme, which is promoted as the key to the transformation of rural governance in India.

### **Advocacy**

IT for Change submitted a solicited paper on the role of CSC's in community development in India to the e-governance division of the Department of Information Technology of the Government of India (see, [www.itforchange.net/gov-ict/73-governance/280-csc-model.html](http://www.itforchange.net/gov-ict/73-governance/280-csc-model.html)). In this paper we argued that CSCs have a role in the overall socio-economic development of the village community, including the delivery of some kinds of public services. However, the CSC programme has to be complemented by another rural telecentre (or community informatics) programme which is based not on a corporate-franchisee model but is centred on the community, and owned by CBOs. This alone will ensure the optimal use of the ICT opportunity for

community development in India. We also presented a schema to identify which public services can be delivered through the CSCs and which require to be delivered by the proposed community-owned telecentres. The paper also provides suggestions on how this new proposed programme of community-owned telecentres could be funded. These ideas were initially presented by us at a workshop on the ICTD project of the Government of India and UNDP that was held in Udaipur, Rajasthan, in November 2009.

### **Looking Ahead**

Perhaps the most significant challenge in the area of ICTs and governance is that while most development actors interested in issues of empowerment and equity normally see democracy and governance as key areas to work on, ICTs in governance are still largely looked upon as a technical area which technologists are expected to take care of. Most development actors are not completely alive to the deep structural implications of ICT-induced changes in governance systems, and the need to urgently engage with these. Our research and advocacy efforts, while being directed at policy makers, need to be as much directed at the community of development actors committed to people's rights and institutional accountability. We plan to develop a network of these actors engaged in the area of participatory development to encourage a wider and deeper ownership of the agenda of ICTs for governance reform and for deepening democracy.

Our existing work on e-governance strategies and programmes of governments will feed into a two year research and advocacy project on 'ICTs for Governance Reform' that we are

commencing in mid-2011 with support from Ford Foundation. This project will critically examine the existing e-governance plans in India, especially with regard to their community level engagements. It will pick up threads from studying the work of groups involved with accountable governance, decentralisation, community monitoring and the right to information, and explore how ICTs can help take these initiatives forward, as well as contribute in other ways towards better governance from an equity and social justice point of view.

Through our Centre for Community Informatics and Development at Mysore, we want to implement a policy-oriented demonstration project called *Khuli Panchayat* (open local self governance system) and are in conversation with some likely funders. This project seeks to source and present all public information pertaining to a village in a community-centric manner. It will also set up regular processes of updating this information from multiple sources. The purpose of this exercise is two-fold. On the community side, the availability of all needed

information regarding local institutions will be used to trigger community activism as well as engagement with local governance activities. On the side of the government, the outcomes from our mapping of information sources, processes of accessing/ updating, the manner in which the community accesses and uses information, etc., will be used to advocate for designing community-centric public information systems. Another component of the project will be to help develop community generated content and information, capturing and systematising it on digital platforms, and using the same for micro-planning.

At the Karnataka state level, we propose to engage with the Karnataka State Knowledge Commission for influencing the model of their proposed knowledge centres, and also partnering with them on possible demonstration projects.

We also plan to continue our work on the 'proactive disclosure of public information and the Internet' through an Asia-based multi-country initiative, which will take forward the work that was completed as a part of the Open Net Initiative.

I find it interesting that this kind of article can now be written with its denouncement of neoliberalism and 'free markets'. I wish it had been written a long time ago.

*Prof. Timothy Barker on the UN-GAID discussion list, on reading IT for Change's article: 'ICTD: Is it a new species of development?'*

# Governing the Socio-Technical Phenomenon

*By making communication and information exchange easy and inexpensive over large distances, ICTs re-organise our social structures into bigger units. Economic globalisation is one early manifestation of this process, but increasingly, all social systems are getting reconstructed over ICT infrastructure, or rather using ICTs as building blocks. The nature of ICTs, which we know can be socially determined in many different ways, therefore have a strong impact on the nature of our social systems. The Internet, as the central paradigm technology of information society, was built by public-spirited people. However, dominant forces, both corporatist and statist, increasingly determine the direction of the evolution of the Internet and its associated technology.*

*The area of technology or ICT governance deals with the means and forces that determine the evolution and availability of technology. Does the present pattern of ICT governance serve global public interest in its diverse manifestations? IT for Change has been involved with issues of ICT governance at global and national levels, with the aim of ensuring that ICT models are open and egalitarian and promote the empowerment of the peripheries of large systems that are getting built. Digital space is curiously devoid of the concept of public, an idea otherwise basic to our social organisation. It is either private and corporatist, or at best invokes the technical principle of neutrality and openness. While these latter ideas are basic to new ICT models, and must be defended, we argue that the more political notion of the public with respect to digital spaces is as necessary to ensure real inclusion and participation of all.*

'Public Software' is a meaningful term for officials working in public services. They can relate to its connotations of universal access and community participation, which are both important goals for their work.

Our work in the area of ICT governance during 2009-10 can be clubbed into three parts: (1) technology standards in e-governance (2) software policies for the public sector and (3) Internet Governance.

## Technology Standards

Standards, by definition, are single and publicly owned, in the sense that no private party can have a special claim over them, much less, seek royalty from their use. However, common sense can easily be not so common in the brave new world of ICTs, where standards are not only privately owned and patented, but frequently have royalties attached to their use. To help systematise the massive e-governance work that is taking place in India, the Department of Information Technology of the

Government of India came out with a draft policy on 'open standards in e-governance'. Quite rightly, the draft sought such standards to be single, non-patented and royalty free. However, a few digital global corporates immediately got into the act, and were able to convince the department to change the draft, and include multiple and patented, as well as royalty encumbered, standards into the draft.

IT for Change, along with other civil society organisations, launched an intensive advocacy and lobbying

*Prof M.K. Sridhar, President,  
Centre for Leadership and  
Management in Public  
Services, Bengaluru,  
Karnataka*

campaign against the dilution of the 'open standards in e-governance' draft policy, and specifically for excluding multiple and royalty encumbered standards. We have considered this issue to be crucial to the direction which ICT models in India will take, given the power e-governance systems have in setting the default rules of the game. However, civil society organisations at large often consider this a very technical matter and do not engage with it. In what was, in our view, a most significant achievement that IT for Change was able to present the 'open standards' issue as a citizen's right to information issue, which is an issue that has the strong backing of civil society and activist groups. Consequently, the influential civil society group, 'National Campaign for People's Right to Information', wrote to the highest levels of the government, protesting against the dilution of the draft policy, and posited that the use of royalty encumbered technology standards in e-governance was a violation of people's right to access public information.

Later drafts of the 'open standards' policy have partially rolled back problematic parts, relegating the possibility of multiple and proprietary standards only to exceptional circumstances. The current draft also clearly mentions that the use of even patented standards should involve no cost. However, we have now suggested text for further improvements to the policy draft under consideration of the department.

## **Public Software**

IT for Change has been exploring the role of public sector agencies in enabling, adopting and promoting Free and Open Source Software (FOSS). IT for Change efforts focus on the challenges involved in building the ecology for the

production and wide scale deployment of FOSS within public sector agencies in India.

Over the course of the year, from our study of FOSS discourse, we felt the need to take a second look at the essential nature of software and its role in the digital society being built. The term FOSS stresses the freedom of the individual to create, study, modify and distribute software with its source code and is in the nature of a negative right. While this right is an important one, we felt, that in a developing country context as ours, there is a need to look at the aspect of ensuring universal access to software that is essential to negotiate an increasingly digital world. As an analogy, in India, with the enactment of the 'Right to Education Act', education has moved from being a negative right (every child has the right to education and cannot be denied it) to a positive right, where the government is now responsible (with support from other sections of society) to ensure children are in school. Similarly, there is a need to look at software essential to accessing and participation by the community in the basic social and public systems as an entitlement of each citizen. Thus, to access information from the government (and other public agency) websites as well as to provide inputs into government functioning (where for example, feedback is sought on government policies or programmes), web browsers need to be universally accessible. Documents available on government sites need to be in formats that are free and open, created through FOSS.

To bring the term into wider discourse, we held a South India regional workshop on 'Software Principles for the Public



*South India regional workshop on 'Software Principles for the Public Sector, with a focus on Public Education'*

Sector, with focus on Public Education' in Bengaluru along with UNESCO, UN Solution Exchange, e-Governance Department, Department of Public Instruction and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan* (Government of Karnataka), Karnataka *Jnana Aayoga* (Karnataka Knowledge Commission). The workshop discussions resulted in a pioneering document - 'Guiding Principles for Public Sector Software', which defined Public software "as software developed or procured, for the public good, which is publicly owned". Public ownership has two important components – providing universal access by ensuring it is freely shareable without any constraints, legal or technological, and enabling communities to participate in its creation and modification, just as universal access to public resources and community participation in the creation and maintenance of public resources are essential. A mailing list called [public-software@lists.public-software.in](mailto:public-software@lists.public-software.in) has been created as a result of this workshop, which will serve as a forum to discuss public software at concept, policy, design and programme levels.

Since the term public sector is defined broadly to include all entities working for promoting public interest, it includes NGOs, CBOs, community media organisations and academia. A workshop on 'Public Software for the Development

Sector' was co-organised by UNESCO, UN Solution Exchange, Knowledge Commons, Digital Empowerment Foundation, *Digantar* and IT for Change at Jaipur that focused on the needs and possibilities for NGOs to adopt public software.

### **Research and Advocacy**

IT for Change completed research on computers in school programmes of Kerala (*IT@Schools*) and Karnataka (*Mahiti Sindhu*). The research identified the basic benefit of using FOSS educational tools in the Kerala model, namely, curriculum focus on learning regular subjects through a rich and diverse set of FOSS educational tools rather than just computer literacy with a limited set of proprietary tools, making these FOSS tools universally accessible and supporting tool customisation to meet local needs. Based on our research, we have advocated with education departments in state governments, specifically Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka, to prefer FOSS educational tools over proprietary applications. In Gujarat, we had advocated with the government last year urging them to not get swayed purely on economic grounds (where the proprietary software was offered free of cost by the vendor). We had a series of meetings with officials in the Gujarat Education and IT departments and also interacted with key people in academia, media, industry bodies etc. Though the Government of Gujarat was initially undecided about the choice of software (proprietary versus FOSS), during the current year, it has chosen FOSS platforms.

IT for Change also led the advocacy on the issue of the Government of Maharashtra entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Microsoft Academy for training

government school teachers. While the vendor solely determines the curriculum in these academies and only the vendor's proprietary technologies are allowed to be taught, the training costs of the teachers are paid by the government. This implies that government funds are being used to promote the software of one vendor, promoting a monopoly as well as a lock-in into proprietary platforms, of teachers and schools. Eminent educationists and development sector actors endorsed a letter to the Government of Maharashtra, cautioning against adverse pedagogical, political and economic implications of such an MoU.

We have been proactive in writing to different Government departments in Karnataka whenever a tender has been issued specifying proprietary software. We have had varying degrees of success, in one case the tender was changed to include both FOSS as well as proprietary software options, and another tender seeking specific proprietary software was withdrawn. All documents pertaining to our advocacy efforts in this area are available on [www.public-software.in](http://www.public-software.in).

### **Networking**

We have also been participating in existing civil society mailing lists where issues relating to ICTs are discussed, e.g. the United Nations Solution Exchange Communities. We have raised the issue of FOSS and proprietary software in discussions on the education and ICTD e-lists. The 'National Coalition of Free and Open Source Software Community of India' that was started in February 2009 held two meetings at New Delhi and at Mumbai, to both increase local participation as well as to refine the agenda and priorities of the alliance. Based on these meetings, specific Special Interest Groups (SIGs) were formed, to

focus on different priority areas. IT for Change is a member of the SIG focusing on FOSS in education. We are also a member of a second national coalition, the Free Software Movement of India. IT for Change has also been working with some key academic institutions on their adopting public software, including the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), MEI Polytechnique, *Digantar*, since it would serve as exemplar to other academic institutions. A quarterly bulletin on Public Software, providing some key information on public software adoption at policy and programme levels in India and elsewhere was begun to create greater awareness about the imperatives of public software. The public software website ([www.public-software.in](http://www.public-software.in)) has become a repository on public software and has case-studies of governments which have adopted public software FAQs and discussion forums for new users, and also guides to using public software in Kannada (on "*Sarvajanika Tantramsha*") and Hindi (*Sarvajanika Software*).

### **Internet Governance**

Internet governance is largely a global issue because of the inherently global nature of the Internet. However, since there are no strong global governance institutions, this crucial space of governance has largely been left vacant. It is either the whims of global corporates or the laws of developed countries that have become the default basis on which the Internet's evolution is being governed. The fact that there is a close matching of interests between governments in the North and global ICT corporates based in the North, makes the situation even more pernicious. The South is then giving pre-determined models of technology, and is expected to be happy with the benefits it can get out of them,

I also want you to know how much difference you make with all your contributions to the Internet Governance Caucus and elsewhere. Your voice is vital, and you also inspire others to speak out.

*Janna Quitney Anderson,  
Director of 'Imagining the  
Internet' project*

*(Posting on the public  
mailing list of the global  
Civil Society Internet  
Governance Caucus (IGC)  
referring to IT for Change's  
engagement with the IGC,  
and with other global IG  
forums)*

while these ICT models become the vehicle for new forms of continued domination of the South by the North. This process has often been referred to as digital imperialism. It is the control over global ICT systems and the ever stringent IP norms that form the basis of new geopolitical dominations, and correspondingly, of exploitation and further exclusion of the marginalised.

IT for Change has sought global Internet Governance to be democratised through the evolution of global policy structures that have equal participation for all countries, with a strong role of civil society through processes of deepening democracy. We have also emphasised that a human rights approach to global Internet Governance must be taken. Further, we have strongly advocated measures to protect the open nature of the Internet's basic architecture.

Over the year we remained highly engaged with the Civil Society Internet Governance Caucus (IGC), the primary space of civil society discourse in this area. As in earlier years, we kept providing development oriented perspectives to the debate, and for a large part helped shape them. We have been very active during 2008-09 to bring the human rights agenda into the UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF) through our engagements with the IGC. These efforts continued and were built over this year, and we succeeded in getting the topic intensely debated in the programme committee meeting for the IGF. Human rights was mentioned in the early drafts of the IGF programme. However, due to stiff resistance by some governments, specific reference to human rights was dropped from the programme, and the plenary which was supposed to discuss human rights was negotiated to be re-named as 'Internet

Governance in the light of WSIS Principles'. Since the 'Declaration of Principles' of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) begins with a commitment to human rights, this was seen as the session where human rights issues vis-à-vis the Internet would be taken up.

The most important IGF related issue and activity this year was about the review and possible renewal of the IGF's initial 5 year mandate. This review was to be undertaken by the UN's Secretary General in formal consultation with IGF participants and submitted to the UN General Assembly for a final decision. While there was never any real danger of the IGF's mandate not being renewed, some very interesting and intense politics emerged around the review and renewal issues. Certain authoritarian developing country governments who had earlier supported the IGF, expecting it to be used to challenge the US's unilateral control of the basic routing infrastructure of the Internet, now began to show signs of changing their views. They were increasingly frustrated by the fact that the manner in which IGF worked gave no opportunity for it to produce any clear outcomes, even if only of recommendatory nature, which was in fact a part of the mandate given to the IGF by the WSIS. On the other hand, they saw that while not delivering what they hoped it would for them, the forum was being used to raise human rights issues, which alarmed them. Some of these countries therefore were beginning to oppose the renewal of the IGF. However, they were in a minority and there was overwhelming support for the continuation of the IGF.

There was much less agreement, however, on whether the IGF should continue in the manner in which it has functioned over



the last five years, whereby no formal outcomes were produced, or if it should considerably reform itself to meet the full requirements of its mandate. Developing country governments were eager that the opportunity of the renewal of the mandate is used to reform the IGF towards a greater and clearer output orientation. Developed countries largely want the IGF to continue basically only as a space for talk and discussion. The business sector, expectedly, sided with this latter view. Unfortunately, so did the majority of civil society actors coming from a civil society space dominated by the North, and so some extent, by techies. IT for Change was one of the few civil society voices which advocated a clear line for the reform of the IGF. We responded to the questionnaire circulated in this regard with suggestions of what kind of reforms may be appropriate. At the annual IGF meeting, we met the UN Deputy Secretary General who was mandated to gather IGF participants' views as part of the civil society delegation, and shared our views. We also spoke at the plenary session on the IGF review, putting across our suggestions for IGF reform. We had been engaging with some developing country governments – especially the democratic ones – to coordinate our strategies in this regard.

The last year was marked by close engagements with the Government of India on Internet Governance issues at both global and national levels. We regularly coordinated our strategies in the IGF programme committee meetings, and also at the annual IGF meeting. At the national level, initial ideas were exchanged for setting up an India IGF, a process expected to be formalised in 2010. We also participated as a panelist in a workshop on 'Internet Governance and Inclusive Growth' organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in

association with the Department of Information Technology, Government of India, in New Delhi, in August 2009.

At the annual meeting of the IGF in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2009, apart from strongly engaging with activities regarding IGF's renewal of mandate, IT for Change organised two workshops. One of these, 'Multistakeholderism at the IGF: Assessing Impact on Participation', was co-sponsored by Panos, London, and presented research based analysis of participation in the earlier IGFs. The workshop had panelists from governments of Greece and Brazil, amongst others. We also organised another workshop on 'The Internet and Citizenship - Applying a Gender Lens', which was a precursor to a gender and citizenship research and advocacy project to be taken up in 2010. Apart from our own workshops, we also spoke in a panel on a workshop on 'Network Neutrality', organised by the Diplo Foundation, and co-organised by us on behalf of the Civil Society Internet Governance Caucus.

In the area of civil society networking on Internet Governance issues, IT for Change was invited to be an advisor to a civil society 'network of networks' proposed by the Association for Progressive Communications. We attended the first meeting of the advisors in September, 2009, in Geneva, and helped shape a tentative agenda for this network of networks.

## Looking Ahead

The national policy on open standards in governance is expected to be adopted soon. Once the policy is in place, it is important to ensure that the implementation mechanism, especially the committee which will decide on adopting standards, is inclusive of civil society, and works in an open and

IT for Change has provided civil society in general, and the Internet Governance Project in particular, with invaluable critical perspectives on Internet governance from the global south. It is a reliable ally in fighting against injustice and unbalanced power relations in the Internet governance space, and tireless in advocating on behalf of regional and local grassroots efforts. We are lucky to have IT for Change engaged in debates over Internet governance, and hope to see them involved more in the institutions that shape global policies.

*Brenden Kuerbis, Internet Governance Project, Syracuse University, New York, United States*

transparent manner. We have already given a written representation to the Department of IT of the Government of India on this subject. It will also be important to see that the policy is used to weed out software and applications which do not incorporate open standards from all levels of e-governance activity, especially at the level of state governments. In addition, we will need to monitor software procurement processes so that they incorporate all the policy requirements.

In the area of public software, the major challenges are of getting more traction in and support of governments on the one hand, and engaging FOSS communities, on the other, towards well-directed efforts of building software for public and developmental purposes.

One specific plan is to work towards setting up Public Software Centres (PSCs) that would provide support to public institutions to adopt public software. The South India regional public software workshop will be followed by an international conference on the same topic at Kochi, in Kerala, and in other regions of India, to create greater awareness of public software and its imperatives for India. The proposed PSCs will work in the spectrum of 'awareness-appreciation-adoption-promotion', and their activities would include creating awareness of and appreciation for benefits, arising from adopting public software through seminars and workshops

as well as news bulletins and media. The Centres would also help institutions adopt public software through user training and installation support for the basic tools of the desktop environment. Linking up with similar initiatives in Brazil and other parts of the world would be an important networking and advocacy activity.

In the area of Internet Governance, strong challenges remain in building a progressive IG agenda at the global civil society level. We will continue to work on this through efforts with the Internet Governance Caucus as well as other networks like the one that is being shaped by the Association for Progressive Communications. At the global institutional level, the coming year will witness intense activity both in terms of reforms to the IGF, and the possible shaping of a new institutional space, which was mandated by the WSIS in its call for beginning a process of 'enhanced cooperation'. IT for Change has been one of the few actors to have kept the debate on enhanced cooperation alive. Since the UN Secretary General's report on this subject will to be considered by various UN bodies in the coming year, there will be a lot of advocacy and networking to be accomplished. This year may also see the launch of India IGF, an idea with which IT for Change has been closely associated with from the beginning. Right from its inception, it is vital that this important policy dialogue forum is shaped as a public interest space and not allowed to be captured by vested interests, especially ICT corporates.

# Community Informatics and Development

*One of the central social processes in information society is of a technology mediated reorganisation of our social relationships and structures in a manner that tends towards 'big systems' rather than small. Economic globalisation is an early manifestation of this process, but information society's big system propensity goes much further into social, cultural and political aspects, increasingly taking control of our lives. It has, therefore, become imperative that advocates and agents of progressive social change operate at two different levels. On the one hand, they need to invest in influencing the nature of technology models that underpin new macro possibilities, through an engagement with ICT governance issues. On the other hand, it is equally important to directly contribute towards creating small counter systems at the peripheries that empower the local against the hegemonic global.*

*IT for Change's Centre for Community Informatics and Development (CCID) in Mysore works with community based organisations involved with a range of development activities, from women's empowerment to livelihood issues. CCID's activities are aimed at exploring how community development processes can be made participatory and effective through new information and communication systems. We help our partner organisations experiment with uses of technology in their work, which can often have transformative effects. The attempt is always to democratise the use of technology among field workers and community members, rather than developing specialised ICT units to support development work. Knowledge gained from these experiments is ploughed back as we work with more groups and organisations, and is also used for advocacy towards community-centric and empowerment-oriented ICTD policies.*

This year, we continued to undertake exciting work in the areas of community radio, community video and community computing in our main test bed among *Mahila Samakhya* Karnataka's (MSK), women's collectives (*sanghas*) in Mysore district of Karnataka state. In addition, we also trained *Vikasana*, an NGO working in the area of livelihoods and gender, in making community radio programs. With the launch of the UNICEF supported project, *Kishori Chitrapata* (Images by adolescent girls), the year 2009-10 marked the beginning of our work in the area of community informatics and education, through a focus on learning processes among out of school adolescent girls.

## Community Radio

*Kelu Sakhi* (Listen, O Friend!) continued to be the 'sangha radio' over this year and is now close to 200 weekly broadcasts. These radio broadcasts enrich the work of MSK among the *sanghas* and

at the village community level. Over the year, two important campaigns were taken up through *Kelu Sakhi*.

The first one was about the importance of attending village assemblies, or the *gram sabhas*. In an eight week long



Recording for  
Kelu Sakhi, Hunsur  
Taluk, Mysore District,  
Karnataka

campaign, the MSK and CCID team did features on the 'why and how' of a *gram sabha*, the funds of a *gram panchayat* (the elected village government) and the duties of elected representatives in the *gram panchayat*. The *sangha* women spoke about their experiences of participating in *gram sabhas* and *gram panchayats*, the hardships they faced and how they were able to overcome these.

This programme was very popular and has had a significant impact. The recordings of interviews with experts regarding *gram sabhas* have been replayed by the MSK's Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) through local audio systems available at temples and other community spaces. There appears to have been an increase in enthusiasm among community members to attend *gram sabhas*. In *Jabagere* village, for the first time, women started participating in the *gram sabha* after listening to radio programmes. When the village leaders took a decision to allocate *panchayat* money for temple renovation, *sangha* women voiced their dissent and ensured that the money was instead allocated towards housing for the poor.

Another campaign was regarding *gram panchayat* elections. It was aimed at motivating women to contest the elections and thus to increase women's participation in local governance. MSK identified interested women and conducted an orientation for them on the electoral procedure. This included simple as well as complex issues, from how to fill a nomination form to how not to succumb to political pressures. MSK women came on air and spoke about why they had chosen to contest the elections, and the challenges they faced, including those presented by the family, community and officials. The CCID team did features on various topics showcasing women already in politics as well as the reservation policy for women in these institutions and how the collective strength of *sanghas* can have great significance vis-à-vis electoral outcomes. Eighty seven MSK women won the *gram panchayat* elections in Mysore district this year.

The impact of the *Kelu Sakhi* has spread much beyond MSK *sanghas*. Men from the community have started calling in to give favourable feedback for the programmes, interestingly and significantly, identifying themselves in relation to *sangha* women (for instance, men now introduce themselves as 'I am the husband of so and so *sangha* member'). Women from many *sanghas* other than those organised by MSK have called to say how they find the programme highly useful and that the collective listening of the programmes at *sangha* meetings is helping them organise collective action. MSK is finding it much easier to start *sanghas* in new villages where women are listening to *Kelu Sakhi*. These women are more willing and forthcoming to organise into *sanghas*.

ITfC focuses on social processes, which is extremely critical for any long-term involvement with the community. Their work for the *Mahiti Manthana* project holds some important lessons on empowering communities which is worth emulating by others.

Amit Chakravarty, National  
Institute of Smart  
Government, Hyderabad,  
Andhra Pradesh

At CCID, there is a continuous endeavour to develop new and effective techno-social tools and formats that are not resource intensive and are suited to the specific context of local communities. During this past year, each weekly programme was set in a different place with authentic live audio elements from the outdoor as background. The idea of such outdoor live recording was to create mobility for the anchor, as well as to make the programmes richer in audio elements, both of which contributed to an increased effectiveness of the broadcast. Feedback for this format is highly encouraging. Some popular outdoor places and contexts include women compering from Mysore *Dasara* (an important local festival) exhibition, women gathered around campfires during winter and women in hilly areas.

Long familiarity with broadcast has given a sense of ease and ownership to women *vis-à-vis Kelu Sakhi* programmes. Women are now much more comfortable to talk about their real opinions and have also started requesting for programmes to be made at their *sanghas*. The *Vox Pop* slot is a newly designed format to go with the increased ease and willingness of women to express themselves. We also experimented with non-scripted programmes. One such popular programme was about women giving a personalised narrative of the history of her village. Women introduced themselves stating their name, village name, family details, their reasons for being in the *sangha*, as well as any personal message they had to share with the audience.

This year saw MSK take up much greater ownership of *Kelu Sakhi*. Apart from integrating the *Kelu Sakhi* programmes more closely in their regular work, MSK's

field staff have learnt to record and have started producing broadcast quality programmes. MSK has constituted an internal committee for *Kelu Sakhi* to take care of all these aspects of the radio programme.

Over the year, the CCID team completed the process of training and initial hand-holding for *Vikasana*, a grassroots NGO based in Mandya district, for developing their own community radio programmes. *Vikasana* is a 25-year old organisation working in the area of watershed development, livelihoods, organic farming, child labour, gender and education. The CCID team trained the *Vikasana* team on recording, editing, scripting and on content management. *Vikasana* now has its own recording team, editing team, scripting team and a core management team that will supervise their community radio activities. They are well on their way to build the initial content bank before live broadcasts of their programmes begin, which is expected to take place within a few months.

## Community Video

MSK women continued to actively participate in making and watching videos on issues that directly concern them. A total of 16 videos were made during the year under review. In addition, many videos on various subjects developed by other agencies were also used.

*Mahila Samakhya Karnataka's* (MSK) field workers carry a set of videos with them during their village visits. These videos help support their agenda of discussing important issues at *sangha* meetings. *Sangha* women organise the audio-visual equipment from their own homes or from the village. They often request MSK workers for a repeat

Use of local instruments and the local dialect is very good. I like this programme.

*Rame Gouda,*  
Government official from  
Channarayapatna, Hassan  
District, Karnataka

Watching a video makes it easier to talk about issues

*Hema, Attiguppe village, Hunsur Taluk, Karnataka*

viewing of videos. Videos are also screened during block<sup>3</sup> level meetings organised by MSK, where MSK personnel facilitate discussions initiated around the issues presented in the videos. *Sangha* women organise community screenings of videos that they determine are important for the whole community. These screenings are usually in the night, with a projector. The entire community gathers for these screenings, which often end with requests for more such screenings. These community screenings help strengthen a leadership role for *sangha* women in the community, which consequently has obvious implications for gender relations.

The impact of community videos is growing and reaching beyond the local community. Many government departments are beginning to see that locally made videos providing relevant information about their work helps them function better in serving the community. Popularity of videos made on the role and work of some departments is acting as both a pressure and an incentive for other departments who were initially more reluctant in this regard. Men from the village have even started to participate in viewing videos at *sangha* meetings and also share their opinions concerning various issues. Screening of

Some positive outcomes from the community video	
In <i>K.R. Nagara</i> block, women watched the 'Bank and <i>Sangha</i> ' video whereby they were able to access bank loans without any assistance from MSK personnel.	After watching a video, a non- <i>sangha</i> villager accessed a subsidy for setting up a flour mill from a government department.
After watching the video about <i>Kelu Sakhi</i> , two women from <i>Melur</i> village belonging to an older generation, bought a radio to enable collective listening.	After watching a video on literacy, two women from <i>Muskere</i> village, joined a literacy camp, learnt to read and write and went for an evaluation. However, they did not pass the test. The women did not give up, practised and cleared the test the next time.
A girl who had dropped out of school from <i>Somnalli</i> watched a video about the importance of the education of the girl child and the facilities available through <i>Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan</i> , and decided to go back to school. This video has also helped the MSK staff in their school enrolment campaign.	Women <i>sangha</i> members from <i>Periyapatna</i> Block went to the horticulture department after watching a video on the schemes of the department and sought help for growing flowers. After learning about the possibilities, they asked the village elders to allot some village land to the <i>sangha</i> where they could grow flowers.

3 A block is an administrative unit consisting of a few scores of villages.

videos has started to attract women to cluster meetings (involving a couple of adjacent villages) and thus enabling MSK field workers to hold such meetings much more regularly.

## Community Computing

During the year under review, the CCID team worked with three village level community telecentres that the *sangha* women refer to as *Namma Mahiti Kendras*, (Our Information Centres), at *Attiguppe, Hosavaranchi and Bannikuppe* villages, and two block level centres at *Hunsur and H.D. Kote*.

*Namma Mahiti Kendras* (NMKs) have steadily come to have a strong influence on the information and communication architecture of the local village community (the local community informatics). *Sangha* women from the village level NMKs have started to become much more active in community activities, because of their widely acknowledged leadership in community informational matters as well as linkages with government departments.

Some of the areas where *sangha* women have shown increased participation is concerning the *gram panchayat*, the school development and monitoring committee, the *anganwadi* (village creche) monitoring committee and the village hygiene and health committee.

Each NMK covers five to six surrounding villages. A village information worker, called *Sakhi* (friend), manages each NMK, while a management committee consisting of *sangha* women and few other village leaders provides overall direction. The *Sakhi* visits all the villages covered by an NMK. She shares information about services available at the NMK with the community. The *Sakhi*

goes from house to house and inquires about the kind of information needed by the community. She also shares her knowledge about government departments and other useful information. The requests for information have ranged from 'how to get a bus pass' to 'how to get jobs for our children'. Requests for agriculture related information, pertaining to seeds, saplings, free manure and subsidised ploughs, pumps, motors and sprinkler pipes are very common. The proactive engagement of the *Sakhi* often draws the interest of villagers and they follow up for more information regarding different agencies by visiting the NMKs. Apart from providing the required information, the *Sakhi* also helps villagers apply for entitlements like old age pension, widow pension, disability pension etc., and assists in processing applications.

The NMK and Block level (a sub-district unit) *Sakhis* work in tandem. The Block level *Sakhi* is the principal conduit to government departments and other agencies like banks. *Sangha* women from NMK villages have slowly begun to assert complete control and ownership of NMK activities. They pool in the money earned from NMKs, through revenue-generating activities like computer education, digital photography, data entry etc, into a corpus called the '*Bhavishya Nidhi*' (future fund). *Sangha* women are increasingly confident of running NMKs on their own. They are reaching out to nearby villages, spreading information about the centre as well as coaxing people to give their photo/video orders to the centre, so that it can keep earning some revenue. They are also taking up many new community-oriented activities which can benefit the local community while strengthening their *sangha*.

We have been very impressed at how you use information to help citizens and hold the government accountable. We wish you success in the future.

Steven Solnick,  
Representative of Ford  
Foundation, New Delhi

I tried three or four times to get myself a certificate and avail of the disability pension but I was not able to get it. Now because of you (NMK *Sakhi*), I am getting Rs. 1,000 every month. I will never forget you.

Puttamma, Physically  
challenged woman,  
Somanalli, Mysore District,  
Karnataka

Extremely good initiative. Good to know that women of the region are utilising the benefits of this programme to the maximum. Such initiatives definitely help in the upliftment and empowerment of the community. Wishing the programme good luck, God bless.

*Dr. Ratan Kelkar, Director,  
Kerala IT mission*

*Handycam training,  
Kishori Chitrapata  
project, Attiguppe  
Village, Hunsur Taluk,  
Mysore District,  
Karnataka*

*Attiguppe* NMK women organised a blood check up for all women at the village NMK. Some women from this NMK plan to buy a tractor at subsidised rates, through a government scheme and rent it to the community members especially to small and marginal farmers who are unable to afford renting tractors at the going market price. In *Hosavaranchi*, the NMK accommodated a group of women builders who stayed in the centre and built toilets for the the entire residential area of a disadvantaged caste.

As *sangha* women are now able to guide community members regarding government information, entitlements and other schemes, this has meant a lot for their status in the community. Villagers, including men, are often found approaching *sangha* women for various kinds of information. *Sangha* women are now much more sought after for a larger role in community activities. On the other hand, as they have become more active in leadership roles in the village, *sangha* women have also grown more aware of social inequities and injustices and are trying to bridge the gap through their endeavours.

## Community Informatics and Education

CCID began a new project, *Kishori Chitrapata* (images by adolescent girls) this year to address the learning needs of out of school adolescent girls or *kishoris*. This project is being done in partnership with MSK, UNICEF and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*<sup>4</sup>, Karnataka. The project explores the innovative uses of video, radio and computing technology for constructivist learning by these young girls. The girls explore their natural and social ecologies through this technology. This process helps them develop self-confidence, a spirit of enquiry, critical thinking and reflection. It opens up new processes as well as avenues of learning for them through relating critically to their immediate environment. The project also aims to help *kishoris* develop radio and video programmes about important community issues, which are then presented to the community for their reflection. This process is likely to create a new empowering role and position for these young girls, who otherwise live on the periphery of the community.

Adolescent girls constitute a highly sensitive group in the village. Most issues concerning adolescence, especially those related to girls, whether they are of bodily changes, sexuality and personal relationships or about their own choices regarding education, career and marriage, never find space in public dialogue. This project seeks to develop such spaces using ICTs, which can nurture the journey of this highly disempowered group towards empowerment, in small but sure steps, while also taking the community along. Community involvement has been seen as key to bring *kishoris* out of their homes, the space in which they mostly remain confined.



4 *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* is India's flagship nationwide education program.



The first stage of the project is being implemented at two villages, *Attiguppe* and *Hosavaranchi*, of *Hunsur* Block in *Mysore*. Both these villages have community telecentres or *NMKs*. The *sangha* women of the village and the *NMK Sakhi* constitute crucial support structures for the implementation of the project.

Most of the *CCID* team needed to be oriented afresh as trainers for all three kinds of technology – video, radio and computers – that are being used in the project. *Sangha* women were given an orientation session to act as a support group for the project. We engaged parents of the girls in repeated conversations to explain why their daughters should participate in the programme, allaying their misgivings in this regard. It was equally important to gain the support of village elders because projects involving adolescent girls carry many social risks.

A full scale curriculum was developed for the education of the girls in a participatory manner, involving the girls, *sangha* women and *MSK* staff, thus practicing a constructivist approach to education. The issues chosen range from life skills to reproductive health, gender, dowry, alcoholism, basic science, agriculture and government programmes.

### Activities at Hosavaranchi Village

In *Hosavaranchi*, *Kishoris* readily agreed to video shoot the process of door-to-door visits by the *NMK Sakhi* for the collection of various informational needs. Traditionally, upper caste areas of the village have been out of bounds for disadvantaged castes. When *kishoris* of disadvantaged castes visited dominant caste areas with a video camera, curious questions were asked about whose daughters they were and what is that they were doing with the camera. Dominant caste members, however,

supported the process; they even agreed to let *kishoris* eat the fruit from their trees. After the visit, *kishoris* said that it was the first time they saw how big their village was and who all lived in it.

The *kishoris* themselves prepared the questionnaire for the video shoot, starting from basic questions like ‘what is information’. The framing of such questions and posing them has been an extraordinary experience; it has helped *kishoris* who had dropped out of school develop confidence and the faculties of critical thinking and inquiry as perhaps no formal system of education could provided.

When the *gram panchayat* elections were round the corner, *kishoris* organised a video shoot around the elections. They prepared questions and interviewed *sangha* women. The following are some of the comments made by the *kishoris* after the interviews:

- ‘I did not know that there were different types of elections happening, I thought once in 5 years people gathered at the school to vote for the government’
- ‘I have never voted though I am older than 18 years’
- ‘Gram panchayat elections are so important’

*Digicam training, Kishori Chitrapata project, Hosavaranchi Village, Hunsur Taluk, Mysore District, Karnataka*



Those who have completed their studies are like this (confident). I feel happy that with this training I am able to reach the level (of confidence) that is usually possessed by those who have studied. In fact, I feel I know more than that.

*Asha, a Kishori, who dropped out of school and later joined the Kishori Chitrapata project, sending a message through community video to other Kishoris, Hosavaranchi Village, H.D. Kote Taluk, Karnataka*

Another topic they chose to make a video on was 'the importance of forests'. They had heard from their elders that there used to be a forest on the outskirts of their village and that it was cleared a few decades ago. Their initial objective was to bring out the message that it is good to preserve trees and forests. During the course of the interview, however, they learnt that elephants from the forest frequently damaged the crops and had even mauled some people. This was the reason why the village community had decided to clear the forest. This pushed the *kishoris* to think critically and they realised that there are no easy answers to many social, ecological and political questions in their specific manifestations.

#### **Activities at Attiguppe Village**

In *Attiguppe*, when *kishoris* were learning about the concept of ambient light while taking still pictures on the camera, one of the exercises given to them was to photograph a petty shop. However, it so happened that the only petty shop in the village was closed that day. A male community member, who saw the *kishoris* returning disappointed because the petty shop was closed, suggested that they could take photographs of his shop instead. His was a barber's shop, a veritable male domain. For the first time, women entered a completely male space in the village. This became possible because they had a digital camera in their hands.

Initially, *kishoris* refused to go out for such outdoor exercises because they were shy and apprehensive about the reactions of adult men and women in the village. They were painfully conscious of the social norms that restricted their mobility. After a few positive and empowering experiences, *kishoris* now readily take to the village

streets, planning and completing their outdoor assignments themselves. They know that when they face any problems, they have *sangha* women to turn to for counsel and support.

*Kishoris* now move around freely in their village. The community knows about their work and appreciates it. Villagers pitch in to support by posing for photographs, by participating in interviews and by making themselves available for video shoots etc. Community acknowledgement and tacit consent has served to legitimise the new found mobility and learning avenues for the *kishoris*.

#### **Looking Ahead**

There has been a drying up of funding in the ICTD area which has been almost as rapid as the advent and rise of ICTD funding in the early years of this decade. ICTD did largely fail in its promise because of the certain distance that this new field has kept from the more traditional precepts and practices of development. The current thinking in donor circles is that it is best to directly fund ICT related activity within, and as a part of, project funding in different sectors like governance, gender, education, health etc. However, it is our experience that a specialised agency is needed, which can evangelise ICT possibilities in the development field and build capacity as well as do some hand holding for development agencies working in different sectors. It is important to create new informational cultures that enable greater empowerment of the local community, challenging the influences of the global that render powerless, the local, and also dismantle exploitative social structures that keep some sections of society in perpetual disadvantage. Getting funding support for a CCID focussed kind of agency is difficult, and though we do get funds for specific

areas like gender, education and governance, some committed core funding for CCID is needed for us to work with greater confidence to meet its objectives as a resource group for a range of development activities.

We plan to extend the *Kishori Chitrapata* project to two large-scale government initiatives that seek to incorporate girls who have dropped out of school back into the school system, through residential schools. These two initiatives are the *Mahila Shikshana Kendra* of MSK, and the *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vasathi Kendra* of the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* of the Government of Karnataka. Both these initiatives provide residential schools to help girls from disadvantaged sections continue in the formal education system. In these initiatives the *Kishori Chitrapata* project will be part of the formal classroom based education process. Therefore, the project will adapt to this situation. The curriculum and pedagogical processes will integrate into the school's regular activities. The opportunity is to demonstrate how ICTs can be used as part of the formal educational process to employ local content in a constructivist manner to enhance learning outcomes. Since a lot of ICTs in schools programmes are being designed currently, there is a

#### ***Signs of change***

Parents of *Kishoris* and the husband of one married *kishori* spoke for a video which showcased the learning gains *kishoris* were making through the *Kishori Chitrapata* project. They mentioned how these girls were benefitting from this training and urged other parents not to hesitate in allowing their daughters to participate and gain from it.

A majority of the *kishoris* in the project are now able to negotiate with their elders for the postponement of marriage for upto two years. All *kishoris* also articulated the desire to take up employment before they got married. The mother of one *kishori* said that she is willing to send her daughter to work as it is good for her. She had seen NMK *sakhi* work and saw it as an opportunity to earn for the family. This statement, coming from a mother who had earlier pulled her daughter out of school, carries weight.

good advocacy opportunity through this project, especially since we are also working along with government education programmes.

IT for Change is planning to start a new field project, *Khuli Panchayat* (open local self-governance system), next year, through CCID. This proposed project will look at new community informatics processes that can deepen democracy at the local level and increase the local community's engagement with various governance processes as well as with specific government programmes like the Rural Health Mission and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme.

# Political Economy of Information Society

*New ICTs have induced basic changes in so many aspects of our everyday lives that information society in the mainstream is seen primarily as a cultural phenomenon. Cultural-anthropological examinations and accounts of information society, which seek to look at it dispassionately, as a process signifying inevitable change, abound, and are no doubt important. However, these changes in which all of us are so centrally involved also require a political economy approach focussed on issues of shifts of power and differential gains and losses for different social groups. IT for Change has chosen to articulate a strong political economy view and analysis of information society developments, an approach we view as vital to deal with issues of exclusion and marginalisation, as well as those concerning new opportunities for equity and social justice.*

*We began by looking at how the technology arena is 'congenitally neoliberal' and how the business sector is seen as the default leader and benefactor regarding all issues concerning ICTs. Examples of this phenomenon range from telecentres run by corporates to e-governance policies drawn up by private sector consultants<sup>5</sup>, often from technology companies having a direct conflict of interest. Moreover, we increasingly see that it is not only the ICT sector that is neoliberal, but the information society phenomenon has a significant neoliberalising impact on most sectors, eroding the norms and institutions associated with democratic public life and citizenship. The political economy question here therefore is not just of production, ownership and distribution of and access to ICTs, it extends far beyond. It impacts the basic institutions of political economy itself, the nature of the state, role of the market and the distinctions between public/commons, on one hand and private/commercial on the other.*

## Political Economy of ICTD

IT for Change responded to IDRC's call for papers on the theme of 'open development' and our proposal was accepted for a presentation in a workshop on the same theme in Ottawa, Canada, in May 2010. In our paper, 'Open But Not Public: Membership in the Information Society as a Club Good', we wrote a comprehensive critique of the concept of openness, which comes from the technology discourse and is now being applied to the field of development itself. This paper critically analyses the elements of openness – greater access, participation

and collaboration, as articulated in IDRC's call for papers, citing empirical evidence from the field of Information and Communication Technology Development (ICTD) and Internet Governance. It argues that the superceding of the idea of public by that of 'openness' will have a serious exclusionary impact, with implications for institutions in the public sphere, democracy and development, as well as those of economic production and distribution. (A draft of the paper, being finalised for a book to be brought out by IDRC can be seen at <http://itforchange.net/development-and-icts/poleco-is/279-opennotpublic.html>)

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5 Both tendencies are central to most Indian e-governance plans.

A highlight of our work this year has been our participation in the Second Harvard Forum on ICTs and Development. Organised by IDRC and the Berkman Center, the event promoted a debate on the future of ICTD. Sharing a discussion space with two Nobel Laureates - Amartya Sen and Michael Spence - at the event was an honour. We were able to argue that the current ICTD outlook and practices are overly reliant on market mechanisms. We donned our advocacy cap at the event to suggest that ICTD needs to embrace a citizenship and capability approach, going beyond the simplistic celebrations of market miracles in ICT diffusion. We also made a case for telecentres as a public and community resource. Our paper, 'Social Enterprise to Mobiles: The Curious Case of a Propped up ICTD Theory' which is due to be published along with others from the Forum can be found in its draft form at [http://publius.cc/social\\_enterprise\\_mobiles\\_%E2%80%93\\_curious\\_case\\_propped\\_ictd\\_theory/091709](http://publius.cc/social_enterprise_mobiles_%E2%80%93_curious_case_propped_ictd_theory/091709).

At the ICTD 2009 Conference in Doha, we organised an invited panel on 'Tracing the Genealogy of ICTD Research: Premises, Predispositions and Paradoxes of a Field in the Making'. The panelists and participants critically discussed the overall factors that characterise the somewhat unique field of ICTD, especially with regard to processes of knowledge production. (The concept note of the panel and submissions of panelists are available at <http://www.itforchange.net/development-and-icts/cci/210-ictd-2009.html>)

IT for Change presented a 'Power Analysis Tool' to examine ICTD research and project design from the perspective of examining whose interests were served and whose ignored, at a Learning Clinic at the IDRC's Pan Asia Networking conference in Penang, Malaysia, in June 2009. We considered two specific case studies, (1) the e-Choupal project of the

Indian multinational commodities company, ITC, and (2) ICT in education policy making process in India. We used the two concepts of 'tech goodies' and 'tech power' respectively to draw out the salient differences between an apolitical and rights-based approach to ICTs. Tech goodies connotes a view of ICTs as low cost - high benefit artefacts or even freebies for the masses, over which however, people have little control. The idea of tech power conveys the desirability of creating and shaping technology in a manner that can always be controlled by users to their advantage, and as determined by them. Accordingly, we argued that ICTD discourse and practice should address issues of power and not just deal with the manifest benefits of ICTs.

At the Strategy Council meeting of the UN-Global Alliance on ICTs and Development (GAID) in Monterrey, Mexico, in September 2009, we critiqued the lack of clarity and development focus in GAID's work, also objecting to the manner in which positions in the governance structures of GAID were being openly linked with resource contributions. We were assured that not all members of the governance structure were expected to contribute. However, we do still consider an open call for contributions made to anyone aspiring to get elected or reconfirmed in GAID's governance structure highly problematic, on principle. We also continue to have issues with the domination of the private sector and a preoccupation with a solutions perspective, in GAID's work. However, since this is the only UN space on ICTs for development, it may not be pragmatic to completely disengage from it.

The Strategy Council meeting was held on the sidelines of the annual assembly of GAID, where one of IT for Change's directors moderated the session on 'Affordable Computing Models for

I consider IT for Change to be one of the most significant contributors to the ICT for Development policy discussion both from a "South" perspective, but also in full awareness and contributing to the larger global discussions on those issues. I should add that almost uniquely their policy contributions are deeply embedded in the practical experience of working directly at the grassroots in implementing community informatics programmes at the village level.

*Michael Gurstein, Ph.D.  
Director of the Centre for  
Community Informatics  
Research, Development and  
Training, Vancouver,  
Canada*



*IT for Change at the Harvard Forum on ICTs*

Schools', which had ministerial and CEO-level participation. He also actively participated in the meetings of the communities of expertise on governance and on gender.

## Political Economy of Knowledge

One of the most important aspects of the political economy of information society is the political economy of knowledge. Developed countries see proprietisation of knowledge as the bedrock of their continued global domination. Developing countries are mostly caught between the increasingly oppressive global and bilateral trade and intellectual property (IP) agreements and the fear that if they themselves do not develop strong IP frameworks, they will simply lose out in the knowledge economy race.

IT for Change submitted a proposal to hold a workshop on 'Cross-border Enforcement of a New Information Order: Issues of Rights and Democracy' at the annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum in Vilnius, Lithuania, in September 2010. The proposal has been accepted. The panel will have representatives from governments of Brazil and Spain, Google, European Broadcasting Union and Consumer International, with IT for Change moderating the workshop. The workshop will examine how the Internet can

become a means of enforcing IP policies of dominant nations across the world through questionable means, which can include third country communication interception and private policing through Internet Service Providers. Some such provisions are feared to be included in the pluri-lateral treaty called Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, being negotiated among Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. Since the Internet is essentially global, any treaty agreed to by the most powerful economies is expected to become the default for the whole world.

The Third World Network, one of the global organisations through to which our South-South alliance is getting strengthened, organised a meeting of a few Southern NGOs and experts in May 2009 in Geneva for developing a framework for 'development friendly IP policies'. We attended the meeting and argued that while legal frameworks of IP are important to ensure democratic flows of knowledge, equally important are issues arising from the very design of global ICT systems which provide the infrastructure for the knowledge flows. We described how, even without resorting to IP based restrictions, dominant players can skew knowledge flows to their advantage through the manipulation of ICT based techno-social infrastructure. We also attended a national-level meeting on IP and development among activist groups dealing with IP issues in different sectors, held in New Delhi in February 2010, and presented similar perspectives, as well as concrete areas for advocacy.

In September 2009, we participated in the workshop on 'Good Planning or Benign Imposition? Innovation, Emergence and Risk in Development Research: Learning from ICTD', organised by IKM Emergent

(IKME). IKME is a programme sponsored by the Dutch government to explore the significance of local knowledge and perspectives in development cooperation. The association with IKME has since expanded in two directions. We are now a part of the evaluation team of the IKME programme itself as southern development actors. We are also working with the group within IKME that looks at the semantic web and is exploring how online architectures of information can privilege knowledge generated by southern actors.

## ICTs and Human Rights

Human rights debates are increasingly being permeated by information society transformations. While it is clear that the contexts of many freedoms and rights are mutating, the big picture is still in a historical flux. However, hitherto, the accent in human rights discourses around the Internet has been on negative rights like freedom of expression and the right to privacy, with social, economic and cultural rights being largely ignored.

While the national governments will need to grapple with these new contexts, global institutional frameworks also need to be revisited. The UN has begun to engage with this need to articulate the meanings of various rights in their information society connotations. The independent expert to the UN on cultural rights approached IT for Change this year for inputs to inform her report to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on how the information society context compounds the category of culture as a concept and as an everyday practice. Our input makes recommendations for further action in the areas of: 1. Internet Governance and Cultural Rights; 2. Public Support for Culturally Diverse and Local Content Production; 3. Educational

Content and Information and Communication Technologies in Schools; and 4. Engagement with 'Digital Natives'. (See, [www.itforchange.net/images/anita\\_unhrc.pdf](http://www.itforchange.net/images/anita_unhrc.pdf)). We participated in a seminar organised by the UNHRC in Geneva in Feb 2010 and since then we have been continuously engaged in a dialogue with the independent expert to the UN. We have sought to alert the independent expert to debates on the increasing threat of corporate control of the Internet and how this complicates the challenges and possibilities for diversity of cultures online.

## Looking Ahead

We have been able to re-look at what doing advocacy is and felt the need to also reach out to local academic spaces for engaging students and their experiences of new technology to build a wider discursive arena for a southern information society. We have delivered lectures this year in local colleges in Bengaluru as well as presented our work at various institutions abroad, like Brown University in the US, and the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK. We have begun to have rewarding associations with students from local and non-local colleges, and we are getting many requests for internships from students.

We now have a robust set of basic frameworks for a political economy analysis of information society developments; concepts like publicness versus openness, citizenship versus a market-consumer framework, and a rights based approach versus efficiency based ones. Over the next year, we plan to build a comprehensive political economy theory of information society from a Southern perspective. We are also now able to frame our practical project level work more neatly within this larger theoretical framework.

# Financial Report

## IT for Change - Consolidated Balance Sheet as on March 31, 2010

2008-09 Rs.	Liabilities	2009-10 Rs.	% of total	2008-09 Rs.	Asset	2009-10 Rs.	% of total
3,367,062	General Fund	1,967,079	10	193,824	Fixed Assets	188,684	1
-	Organisation Stabilisation Fund	1,853,653	9	9,445,281	Current Assets, Loans and Advances	18,548,384	94
720,923	Asset Fund	799,325	4	585,418	Receivables	972,464	5
5,753,824	Advance Account	14,440,185	73				
382,715	Sundry Payables	649,290	3				
<b>10,224,523</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>19,709,532</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10,224,523</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>19,709,532</b>	<b>100</b>

## IT for Change - Consolidated Income and Expenditure for the year ended March 31, 2010

2008-09 Rs.	Expenditure	2009-10 Rs.	% of total	2008-09 Rs.	Income	2009-10 Rs.	% of total
7,466,391	Establishment Costs	7,353,372	66	13,084,850	Funds received	10,425,183	94
4,273,310	Operating Costs	1,714,509	15	242,000	Other Income	496,182	4
1,464,557	Administration Costs	1,385,577	12	790,017	Excess of Expenditure over Income	87,636	1
175,571	Depreciation	175,807	2	161,211	Excess of Expenditure over Income- depreciation transferred to Asset Fund	82,930	1
898,249	Excess of Income over Expenditure	462,666	4				
<b>14,278,078</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>11,091,931</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14,278,078</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>11,091,931</b>	<b>100</b>



## Schedule of Funds Received and Utilised during the year 2009-10

Project	Funder-Country	Opening Balance	Funds Received	Funds Utilised	% of Funds Utilised	Closing Balance
ICT's for Participatory Local Development	United Nation Development Program, New York	866,585	-	288,625	3.0	577,960
Information Society for South Project	FORD Foundation, New York	1,633,894	-	1,583,593	16.0	50,301
Information Society for South Project	International Development Research Centre, Canada	1,252,741	2,209,341	2,696,972	27.0	765,110
Information Society for South Project	Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries, Netherlands	830,211	2,213,112	1,813,800	18.0	1,229,523
Community Radio Unit	National Institute for Smart Government, India	446,175	299,962	746,137	7.0	-
Free/Libre/Open Source Software in public sector	European Union, Belgium	625,273	569,870	1,134,901	11.0	60,242
Open Net Initiative	International Development Research Centre, Canada	107,940	499,387	521,281	4.5	86,046
Teachers Communities Of Learning	Edukans Foundation, Netherlands	-	1,677,260	41,479	0.5	1,635,781
Gender IS Citizenship	International Development Research Centre, Canada	-	10,171,278	136,056	1.0	10,035,222
Kishori Chitrapata	United Nation's Children's Fund, India	-	1,004,916	1,004,916	10.0	
<b>Total</b>		<b>5,762,819</b>	<b>18,645,126</b>	<b>9,967,760</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14,440,185</b>

## IT for Change Team

Bangalore		Mysore	
Name	Designation	Name	Designation
Parminder Jeet Singh	Executive Director	Aparna Kalley	Project Coordinator
Anita Gurusurthy	Executive Director	Venkatesh Prasad	Project Coordinator
Gurusurthy Kasinathan	Director	Chinmayi Arakali	Senior Project Associate
Niveditha Menon	Research Associate	K. Krupa Thimmaiah	Senior Project Associate
Vinay Sreenivasa	Research Associate	Chethana M.G.	Field Associate, CCID
Krittika Vishwanath	Research Associate	Harisha N.	Field Associate, CCID
Aishwarya Madineni	Research Assistant	Mangalamma	Field Associate, CCID
Shivani Kaul	Research Assistant	Prabha G.R	Field Associate, CCID
Gabriela Goulart Mora	Communication and Publications Officer	Shivamma N	Field Associate, CCID
Sona Pradeep	Programme Administration Officer	Shreeja K	Field Associate, CCID
Anupama Joshi	Technical Project Associate	Shabharisha M.	Technical support
Shariff K. Mulla	Technical Project Assistant	Manoj Kumar B	Videographer
Mala. R.	Accounts Officer	Rehmat Unnisa	Accounts and Administration Assistant
Revathi S.A.	Office Administrator and Secretary	Tilak Rajkumar	Driver and Administration Support
Pablo Grandjean	Communications and Publications Intern		
Prasanna Kumar B.K.	Office Assistant		

## About IT for Change

IT for Change is an NGO located in India. We work in the area of information society theory and practice from the standpoint of equity and social justice. We do research, engage in advocacy at national and global levels and work on projects in the field. Through these efforts, we aim to challenge ICT approaches in development that are exclusionary and disempowering, and propose alternative models that are participatory and equitable. Our work spans a range of development arenas - gender, education, community media and governance.

IT for Change is in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.





*Villagers at a photo exhibition presented by adolescent girls involved with the Kishori Chitrapata (Images by Adolescent Girls) project*