Community Participation
in the context of local telecentres
(one stop shops)

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Nov 22nd 2011

Conversations with the Mongolian delegation and LoGIn

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Community participation in governance

- Tradition of participatory governance
  - Addressing the goal of local democracy and social inclusion
  - Porto Alegre – participatory budgeting
    - Locality based involvement in spending decisions
    - 'Public justification' as guarantee against politicisation
    - Driving vision – radical vision of bottom-up democracy
    - Popular participation, transparent governance, democratising the state and a new political cutlture
    - New Participatory structures – guided by ground rules for deliberation
    - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXeI5JX3Pmk

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Participatory budgeting 2.0

- Belo Horizonte capital of Minas

  - In the 90's PB introduced for monitoring spending on public housing through assemblies / district forums

  - 2006, e-voting introduced to decide on public works

  - Reduction in time and cost of participation

  - No assembly, voting upto 42 days online

  - More younger people came into the decision-making process.

  - Success based on citizen perception of their impact on the decision-making process / trust

  - Upscaled thru Public Telecentre Networks

Closer home - India

- Local self government in India
  - Legalised, modern institutions of governance
  - Response to failures – poverty, institutions
  - Gram sabha – village assembly as deliberative body
  - 3 tier structure, elections from territorial constituencies
  - Reservations for women, weaker castes
  - State election commission, district planning committee

India

- Federal structure, authority to be devolved depends on state govt

- Combination of direct and representative democracy

- Largest experiment in decentralisation

- A list of 29 items for direct implementation, 3 million, 2.5 lakh GPs

- Kerala, ombudsman for local govts, social welfare, education, poverty alleviation, health, water, sanitation etc.

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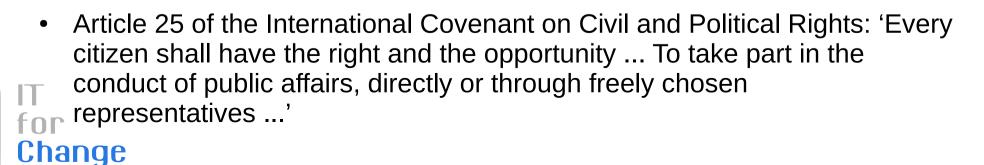Change

ICTs for local self govt – Kerala

- Computerisation and networking of local self gov institutions.

- Decentralised planning, local eco dev,

- http://lsg.kerala.gov.in/en/InforKeralaMission_en.php

- 2 things – citizen accountability and empowerment of functionaries – as stated vision

- Citizen data bases to map suites and estimation tools

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Participation - Ethos

- Development as freedom – both opportunity and process (Sen 2002)

- Freedom from illiteracy, hunger, disease etc and the process to achieve these outcomes

- The freedom to participate in development process / public affairs

- This recognition is quite explicit in the Declaration of the Right to Development adopted by the United Nations in 1986, which says:'The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realised.' (UN 1986, Paragraph 1 of Article 1)

  - Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: 'Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity ... To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives ...'

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One stop shops and the community

- The notion of community and participation changes with digital capabilities

  - Communities become hybrid

  - Participation acquires new scale

  - 'Network publics' emerge

- Techno-managerial versus participatory democracy

- Balancing efficiency with inclusion (social investment)

- Balancing informational asymmetry with accountability

- User versus citizen

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A flavour of what is possible

- Local planning – Abhiyan uses GIS

- Assessment of training needs – MSSRF

- Citizen monitoring of food supplies under PDS

- Authentication of official data – Mission Convergence

- Ushahidi – citizen journalism

- Safe cities project – South Korea

  - *Important to remember that participation through ICTs is not about a software or an application. It is a process, a culture of democracy as simple as the use of video for electoral education; radio for narratives of civic struggles*

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Why 'driving politics' is important?

"When panchayats are strong, such centres that serve the citizens can work well and in coordination with the local level government. Only strong panchayats will have plans, members, funds and work to do. If they have none of this, what use is a Akshaya centre to them? I firmly believe that digitisation of panchayats is meaningless if there is no effective local governance. In Kerala, the People's Planning process revolutionized local governance and strengthened panchayats immensely. Panchayats have the budgets and the decision making power over many areas of governance – this means more opportunities for Akshaya entrepreneurs to work with panchayats. More importantly, years of people's struggles has bequeathed us a political culture which is information-oriented, rights-oriented and focused on decentralization – We carry this political culture even to the new e-governance initiatives which have been proposed. In Kerala, Akshaya works because of this culture in our political life. Without this political culture, nothing would have been possible here."

Interview with local govt member, Kannur, Kerala July 2011, IT for Change