



Role of Information And Communication Technologies (ITC) in Management of Development Programmes

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is used as a term for all kinds of technologies which enable users to create, store, dissemination, bringing value addition and manage information. It is a combination of information technology and communication technology. The capacity of ICT to acquire and generate knowledge in all forms including recovery and up gradation of traditional knowledge through knowledge networking makes it an important development tools for management of programmes seeking improvement of human condition particularly the unprivileged and marginalized section of the society. The benefits accrued from the synergy of knowledge and CTs should flow to all strata of the society. The effective use of ICT opens possibilities for information for development, empowerment and business would necessitate removal of number of obstacles; viz, illiteracy, poverty time famine (specially in case of rural women), mobility, relevancy, availability/ facility, cost etc. However, adequate safeguards have to be developed to prevent the use of ICT for organized crimes, frauds. Cyber crimes etc by unscrupulous elements.

KEYWORDS: Information Technology, Communication Technology, ICT.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely believed that effective participation of all sections of Society, especially those hitherto deprived and marginalized, is crucial for ensuring sustainable development. Only those who effectively participate in development programmes meant for them could be enabled to contribute in shaping their future and to derive equitable benefits from such programmes. It is therefore, imperative that the strategies for socio-economic development should develop a mechanism to reach the unreach and ensure their effective participation in order to harness their potentials by creating environment where the deprived and marginalized section of the society could collectively think, create communicate in total freedom and could take informed decisions on issues affecting their life. The effective participation of marginalized people at all stages of development programmes, viz planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation could be best ensured only by empowering them which calls for judicious use of available information and communication technologies. ICT applications could play a crucial role in empowering the hitherto deprived, unprivileged, marginalized section of the society to contribute and participate effectively by using their ideas, knowledge and creativity in economic and social programmes and to make informed decision on issue affecting them. Hence, ICT is a highly valuable tool for development for all those; viz, planners, policymakers, development leaders, community based organizations, NGOs and activists involved in the process of sustainable development.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) often refers of a mix of variety of technological tools such as a radio, television broadcasting, audio and video cassettes, telephone, fax, various kinds of mobile phones, audio-

video conferencing, computer- based communication (e-mail, web access, on-line communication etc.), other developing information and communication tools and resources etc, which leads to create, disseminate, store, bring value addition and management of information. Technologies aiming at Net working of knowledge is an integral part of knowledge sharing mechanism. It is generally believed that sources of knowledge is unlimited and infinite and further proliferate with its use. The capacity of a nation to acquire and generate various forms of knowledge including the tapping and up gradation of traditional knowledge and its widespread dissemination, absorption and use would be reflected in initiating effective process aiming at change, empowerment and sustainable development.

It may, however, be noted that in order to obtain desired results, it would be necessary that knowledge networking models need not be confined within closed boundaries of information flows but it should have the potential to evolve an alternate model for development promotion (Stephen; A 2006). At the very conceptual level, ICT have the potential to digitally link each and every person in the world (if certain barriers are removed) a star topology network which open up endless possibilities for information exchange leading to formation of new class of society- the knowledge-society with fundamental resource for all economic and social development activities through process of synthesis of knowledge possessed across communities. Effective use of ICT has some unique advantages in planning, mplementation and management of socio-economic pogrammes a few of them could be enumerated as under:

- Knowledge networking open up alternate forms of communication to those (especially weak, exploited

and deprived section) offered by the conventional, vested interests and even government controlled media sources and this leads to enlarging perspective, creating deeper understanding of the current situation and causes of poverty and deprivation. It would often initiate interactive process for information exchange for identifying exact causes and factors responses for their miseries and impoverishment . It would constitute the first step to-wards empowerment .

- ICT has potential to significantly reduce the role of time and distance in organising business, production and commercial activities leading to competitive advantage for the user organization. It greatly facilitates e-commerce. ICT therefore, has the potential to open up economic opportunities for lower strata of the society.
- It could help in creating a variety of jobs specially for women (Mitter Swasti and Sheeta Rowbothan , 1975) in service sector in developing countries by opening a window in outside world.
- It seeks to eliminate the boundaries between the various branches of the governing institutions and its different levels. The ICT-government models are marked by a shift to-wards community-based approaches and is marked by widespread growth and influence of community on governance mechanism thus, increasing the opportunity for participation of all sections of society in decision making leading to political empowerment.
- ICT could provide effective e-lead and direction for development of cost effective people centric technologies/appropriate technologies and could help to reduce the Urban-rural/rich-poor technological divide.
- ICT has great potential for creating women equality and empowerment (Marcelle, Cillian M, May 2000) and in meeting the target of Millinim Development Goals (Vinayak, V. and Dr. Kushwaha, 2011)

ICT could help in exposing and containing corruption in public life (wikipedia. Org. Anti Corruption efforts) ICT is increasingly being used for uplift of women and other unprivileged section of the society in many developing countries of Asia, Africa, Caribbean islands, south pacific countries and Latin American Countries in the areas such as improving access to education, distance mode of learning, women development & empowerment, employment in formal sector ,IT based business, agriculture, water resource distribution and rural development (Huyer, Sophia, 1997 and Mitter, Swasti and Shila Rowbothan, 1995.) However, there are contain barriers which inhibit effective use of ICT for the development of poor and women because of certain barriers such as illiteracy, poverty, time famine, socio-cultural factors, mobility, relevancy, availability of facilities for ICT and cost factors. Planners and development leaders must take care to remove/minimize these bottlenecks while using ICT as tool for sustainable development and many developing countries are making consorted efforts to remove these barriers.

In India; looking at the importance of ICT as a tool for development, the Govt. of India has launched a project to have 2-5 lacs tele-centres connecting every panchayat

by 2012 to ensure rural access to various on line services like railway reservation, weather information etc with a specific plan to use inter net service in a big way for distance learning. (Ghosh Ashok, May 2011). According to IHBR survey (Source: Editorial "Ride the IT wave", TOI, dt. 15-4-2011) the internet penetration in rural India would be doubled this year . The total number of rural internet users in rural areas is projected to touch 24 millions. Demand for mobile phone in rural India is raising (there are more than 700 million mobile phone subscribers to-day compared to just 2 million in 2000) It is felt that along with infra-structural growth of IT, the felt-need for knowledge sharing and increasing demand for information would greatly contribute to bridge rural and urban digital divide leading to equitable growth. The said planned IT intervention has in fact resulted in creating IT wave in the country which could be attributed to increasing awareness , greater accessibility and the initiative of government's national e- governance plan and the support from private sector project such as ITC e-choupal and Google internet Bus in educating the rural people about the benefits of the internet . The 90,000 rural IT kiosks would definitely help in future to empower people across India as a result of creation of information super highway reaching every Panchayat in the country.

ICT infra-structure is bound to give boost to rural economy. It would enable farmers to update themselves on farming techniques, weather forecasts, sources of farming, inputs and equipments, trading prices of farm produce and connectivity with markets at various levels . Besides, the rural population through inter-net could access to information available relating to welfare schemes, legal protection to women and minority, work opportunity, support available for entrepreneurship in addition ton oppertunity for life-long learning .It is also expected that that e-governance would help to streamline delivery of government services at grass root level giving a boost to welfare measures initiated by the government . However, to make the above happen, it would be necessary to remove the barriers of knowledge networking so that it could help communities both men and women in sharing the knowledge they possess and this knowledge in wide social domain would lead to desired change through the use of ICT. Thus the ICT would open up a new way of interactive communication between Govt. bodies, NGOs, Corporate Sector, academic and research institution, civil/society generating new ideas and innovative solutions to development problems. However, there is strong need to develop a set of cyber laws, rules and regulation, necessary safeguards etc. to prevent its misuse by unscrupulous elements for organised crimes, cyber crimes, piracy and encroachment on privacy of citizen.

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