



# ICT POLICIES FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION – REVISITED

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# ICT POLICIES FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION – REVISITED

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- What has worked?
  - What hasn't work?
  - What can be learned from the experience?
  - What areas still require new knowledge?
  - What policy advice might arisen from the experience?
  - What possible role could UNESCAP and other international organizations have in spreading and implementing effective policies for the use of ICTs in poverty reduction?
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# WHAT HAS WORKED?

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It is difficult to determine and measure the impact of ICT and poverty in quantitative terms, however its general qualitative benefits as follows:

Poverty reduction through direct and indirect job creation;

- Marketing opportunities for individual producers and small businesses;
- Access to information relevant to livelihood;
- Access to information on ways to improve work productivity, health, etc;
- Increased access to education and training;
- Social mobilization and community initiatives;
- Protection of local resources and sustainable use of environmental resources;
- Empowerment of women through access to information.



# WHAT HAS NOT WORKED – WHY?

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- Lack of government funding
  - Low market demand
  - Donors regard ICT as a passing fad
  - Low awareness at all levels
  - Lack of community involvement
  - Illiteracy and lack of formal education
  - Income disparity between nations and citizens
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# LESSONS LEARNED

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- The coherence of policies matters;
  - An explicit focus on using ICT in pursuit of developmental goals;
  - A number of inter-related factors should be addressed to maximize the benefits of ICT for development;
  - Development should be country driven, participatory, comprehensive, and results oriented;
  - To ensure ownership and sustainability, the development community should create space for partnerships.
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# LESSONS LEARNED

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- Bridging the Digital Divide is now in the list of priorities of funding agencies and governments alike. Despite this commitment, however, a realistic and feasible agenda to apply ICT for poverty alleviation purposes, appropriate for developing countries seems to elude most development assistance agencies
  - It is imperative to use ICT to improve the competitive position of a developing country in the global economy, but this may fail to meet some development goals if it diverts attention from fostering local markets and businesses.



# LESSONS LEARNED

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- An explicit focus on using ICT in pursuit of developmental goals allows countries to achieve a wide diffusion of benefits from ICT and contributes to both broad-based economic growth and specific developmental goals;
  - A number of inter-related factors should be addressed to maximize the benefits of ICT for development. These include building human capacity, creating incentives for enterprise, developing appropriate content and increasing competition, especially among telecommunications and Internet-related businesses;
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# LESSONS LEARNED

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- The success of national ICT strategies is dependent upon the coordination and alignment of efforts undertaken by all stake-holders and actors involved, at global, national, and local levels;
- The coherence of policies matters. Reducing poverty requires better coherence in government policies affecting development. Key policy areas with potentially strong poverty reduction include initiatives addressing debt relief, trade, investment, agriculture, the environment, migration, and health research.



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# LESSONS LEARNED

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- Economic Growth: Pace, quality and equity. Reducing poverty calls for rapid and sustainable pro-poor growth. This requires good governance, prudent macro-economic management, competitive markets and a vibrant private sector, efficient institutions and sustainable use of natural resources;
- Reducing poverty calls for political will by all partners, esp govt. Poverty reduction involves a political process. It requires dedicated efforts to empower the poor by strengthening their voice and fostering democratic accountability.



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# LESSONS LEARNED

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- Development should be country driven, participatory, comprehensive, and results oriented. To ensure ownership and sustainability, the development community should be moving from agency driven to country led activities, creating space for partnerships through integrated programmes, projects and sector wide support;
  - Better aid management for increased effectiveness. Effective aid for improved aid co-ordination by working collaboratively, undertaking joint tasks, and combining skills and resources. While maintaining high standards of accountability and transparency, efforts can simplify and harmonize administrative and financial requirements.
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# AREAS OF INTERVENTION

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- Technological interventions should be supplemented by focusing on local content provision;
  - Regional dialogues between governments to determine standards, platforms and protocols for information and knowledge exchange;
  - The use of poverty maps should be fully exploited through the collection of highly disaggregated census and economic data;
  - The applications of ICT in education should be fully supported for their long term socio-economic potential.
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# POLICY ADVICE

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- Awareness, advocacy and policy formulation
  - Connectivity, affordable and equitable access
  - Capacity and institution building
  - Local language content and cultural diversity
  - Creative solutions to connect the unconnected
  - Networking
  - Funding
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# POLICY ADVICE

- Efforts should be made to develop viable ICT Poverty Alleviation programmes. These programmes should be coordinated across agencies in the best spirit of networking, to ensure proper focus in resource use and synergy in development efforts;
- A regional approach to program development should be adopted since ICT and poverty alleviation transcend national borders;
- The small, spontaneous but fragmented initiatives among private agencies and non-governmental organizations to bridge the Digital Divide should not only be encouraged and facilitated but be mainstreamed and coordinated by putting up an ICT for Poverty Reduction Small Grants Fund that can be micro-managed by regional agencies;



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# POLICY ADVICE

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- Technological interventions should be supplemented by strong content provision. It should run parallel with a development programmes, providing mutual reinforcement between ICT utilization and impacts;
- Governments and government agencies within the same region should initiate dialogues to determine standards, platforms and protocols for information and knowledge exchange and re-use. A regional approach to knowledge networking should be adopted;



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# ROLE OF ESCAP AND IGO

- Drawing up of new programmes and the development of the ones in progress, within the existing institutions and initiatives;
- Development of stakeholders' networks;
- Establishing a Media and Communications Strategy;
- Enhancing Resource Mobilization;
- Providing assistance in designing national and regional ICT strategies;
- Supporting universal participation in new int. policy and technical issues;
- Improving connectivity, increasing access and lowering costs for using the communications networks;
- Promoting efforts to support local content and application creation;
- Promoting ICT for health care and in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other infectious and transmissible diseases;
- Fostering enterprise and entrepreneurship in ICT for sustainable economic development, including poverty alleviation – esp. SMEs.



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# CONCLUSION

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- Development theories have evolved in the past 30 years- bullet / hypodermic needle approaches have to be discarded as they have been proven to be inaccurate. Access to information alone will not change the fate of the poor.
  - Donor organisations must include considerations of the various dimensions of poverty within their equation due to the complex nature of poverty itself.
  - Difficult to justify to the fight against poverty unless one looks at the broader, more complex, and deeper development divides and their co-relation.
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# CONCLUSION

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- Integrate economic, social, environmental and governance concerns within a comprehensive approach to development at the country level.
- The identification of and continued focus on economic and social development goals is a key determinant of success.
- Focus areas: food security, connectivity, building capacity in technical education and training, enhancing healthcare and quantity of life, governance, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and local content development.



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# CONCLUSION

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- Understand context of local conditions
  - Secure the participation and commitment of all key stakeholders
  - Heads of government - leadership to confront existing barriers and promote innovative solutions.
  - National and international private industry should work closely together to adopt, adapt and develop technologies to meet the unique needs
  - Civil society should be a critical player and help assure that ICT is used in a way that targets and addresses specific development goals and priorities.
  - Stakeholder participation should be the cornerstone of conceptualisation
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THANK YOU

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