

UNDP Workshop
on
E-Inclusion and Media for Indigenous Peoples.
At the e-Bario Knowledge Fair
December 6-7 2007



Background

Indigenous peoples continue to feature among the least-served sections of many societies. They face a diverse range of issues and concerns associated with their status and their interaction with other cultural groups, and changes in their inhabited environment. These issues include cultural and linguistic preservation, land rights, ownership and exploitation of natural resources, political determination and autonomy, environmental degradation and incursion, high rates of poverty, poor health, substandard education and discrimination.

The adoption on 12th September 2007 by the United Nations General Assembly of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples reflects the continuing concern that indigenous peoples suffer from historic injustices that still prevent them from exercising their right to development. The Declaration further welcomes the fact that indigenous peoples are organizing themselves for political, economic, social and cultural enhancement; acknowledging that they have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

Moreover, the Declaration affirms several key rights that indigenous peoples retain, including the following;

- The right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures.
- The right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media.
- The right to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including education, employment, training, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
- The right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts.
- The right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.

Many of the problems that the Declaration addresses are not exclusive to indigenous peoples. Some are typical of those that suffer from one or more of the various manifestations of social exclusion; yet the Declaration affirms the specificity of the problems of indigenous peoples and the particular difficulties that they face in overcoming them. Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live.

Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household. Building socially inclusive societies based on the values of equality and non-discrimination is critical if all peoples are to be able to claim their human rights.¹

Alongside such affirmations, solutions to the problems of social exclusion are actively being sought, developed and implemented with the help of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and new media; comprising computers and the internet and also the more traditional forms of print, radio and television as well as the newer mobile and wireless technologies. ICTs, often in the form of community-based telecentres and/or Community TV/Radio broadcasting, are rapidly spreading throughout the rural and sometimes isolated areas in which many indigenous peoples live, offering them opportunities to deal with some, potentially all, of the issues highlighted by the Declaration. Many countries in Asia are in the process of setting up national networks of rural telecentres and other communication channels towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals as well as greater levels of social inclusion, giving rise to the concept of e-inclusion. E-inclusion adopts ICTs and new media as strategic tools for achieving social and economic inclusion; raising living standards and providing opportunities for underserved sections of society for full and equal participation in the processes of globalisation and democratic governance from which indigenous societies are often excluded. Such implementations have special relevance for indigenous peoples: i) they address the specifics of the Declaration; ii) they acknowledge the underserved and excluded status of indigenous peoples; and iii) they provide a communication channel for indigenous voice and self expression, and for information-intensive development activities that has hitherto been denied to remote and isolated communities.

Asia contains the majority of the world's present-day indigenous populations, about 70%. For the most part, they remain marginalised in terms of social and economic development, compared with their national compatriots. In Vietnam, for example, the government estimates that by 2010, 90% of the poverty in the country will be among the ethnic minorities. In China, although ethnic minorities make up less than 9% of the population, they account for 37% of the known cases of HIV. If indigenous peoples are to achieve enhanced levels of social and political inclusion new and innovative approaches are called for. The Declaration obliges those concerned; governments, aid agencies and indigenous institutions, to explore all available modalities towards realising the human rights for development that have been denied to indigenous peoples for too long. ICTs and new media provide such opportunities; offering increasingly potent solutions to development initiatives that are information-driven, such as those that are highlighted within the Declaration.

Objectives of the Workshop

The overall objectives of the workshop are to:

- Raise awareness by sharing good practices on ICT and media for indigenous peoples
- Brainstorm on and develop proposals for modalities and mechanisms for increasing e-inclusion for Asia's Indigenous Peoples
- Formulate an agenda on e-inclusion in the context of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Obtain inputs to create a knowledge primer on e-inclusion for indigenous peoples

¹ Reducing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion, a DFID Policy Paper. Published by the Department for International Development, September 2005

- Develop a strategy for producing a knowledge portal for Asia's Indigenous Peoples

More specifically the workshop seeks to;

- Bring together researchers, practitioners and indigenous peoples to share their knowledge and to develop proposals for increasing e-inclusion for the world's indigenous peoples.
- Review the outcomes of the e-Bario telecentre project and its impact in promoting e-inclusion for the indigenous Kelabit community in Borneo, since its inception in 1998.
- Solicit contributions from the indigenous Kelabit community, arising from the review and from their own evaluations and aspirations, for the continued development of e-services for enhancing their level of e-inclusion within Malaysian society in particular, within the wider processes of globalisation and towards the achievement of the principles of the Declaration.
- Raise awareness, through the sharing of experiences and ideas, among other indigenous communities, within Borneo, Malaysia and beyond, of the opportunities and potential for ICTs and new media to enhance the prospects for elevated levels of e-inclusion for them.
- Document the findings in a relevant peer-reviewed journal, and also in other forms of publication.
- Propose appropriate modalities and mechanisms that will accelerate the pace towards e-inclusion for the world's indigenous peoples, including a time-based action plan with follow-up mechanisms to determine benchmarks and the measurement of progress.
- Formulate a proposal for a global network of indigenous peoples' telecentres that will foster the exchange of experiences and knowledge towards accelerating the pace of achieving e-inclusion for the world's indigenous peoples.
- Establish the e-Bario Agenda on E-Inclusion for Indigenous Peoples; a supplement to the United Nations General Assembly of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, that will highlight their rights of access to information and the required access to contemporary ICTs and new media that will enable indigenous peoples to exercise such rights towards enhanced levels of e-inclusion.

Workshop concept and location

The workshop will take place in connection with the e-Bario Knowledge Fair 6-8 December 2007². Bario is a small, isolated community in the highlands of northern Sarawak, one of the East Malaysian states on the island of Borneo. There are no roads leading there; access is by small planes from the coastal city of Miri. Bario is the site of the multi award-winning e-Bario telecentre project. The e-Bario Knowledge Fair offers a unique experience whereby a remote and underserved indigenous minority community will demonstrate how they have utilized ICTs and new media and what the outcome has been. The Knowledge Fair will be centred on the e-Bario telecentre, and the indigenous community that it serves. Unlike most conferences on ICTs for this type of developmental activity, the affected peoples themselves will be on their own turf, the project beneficiaries will be in the same room as the professionals and academics and they will be directing events. The location will bring home to visiting participants the reality of life for an indigenous community living in a remote and isolated area and the impact that ICTs can have in such locations. Remote and isolated indigenous communities will be provided with a rare and unique global platform with which to voice their own problems and aspirations and to share their experiences.

² For more information on this please visit: <http://www.ebarioknowledgefair.org/>

Follow-up actions

UNDP will use the workshop as the foundation for developing a project on e-inclusion for Asia's Indigenous Peoples in the context of the Regional Programme Document 2008-2011. The workshop is therefore intended to take stock and get a lay of land of the current situation and to develop ideas as well as identifying needs, opportunities and setting priorities for future high impact actions in the realm of access to information, independent media development and ICT for Asia's Indigenous Peoples. The major outputs of the workshop will also be presented at GK3, the 3rd Global Knowledge Conference, organised by the Global Knowledge Partnership and being held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 11-13th December 2007. Moreover, the workshop will provide essential input on the current status, lessons learnt, good practices and the way forward which will be included in a knowledge primer to be released in 2008. The first draft of the primer can be produced and presented at the workshop.

UNDP Partners

UNDP Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme - UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok

A UNDP programme that aims to promote the development and application of ICT for sustainable human development in the Asia-Pacific region

UNDP Regional Initiative on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Development in the Asia and the Pacific (RIPP) - UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok

A UNDP programme that aims to strengthen policy dialogue on indigenous peoples' rights and sustainable development, and information sharing amongst indigenous peoples

UNDP Asia Regional Governance Programme (ARGP) - UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok
UNDP's flagship regional democratic governance programme for Asia -Pacific

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