

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies have become a significant factor in development, having a profound impact on the political, economic and social sectors of many countries. ICTs can be differentiated from more traditional communication means such as telephone, TV, and radio and are used for the creation, storage, use and exchange of information. ICTs enable real time communication amongst people, allowing them immediate access to new information. ICTs play an important role in enhancing dialogue and understanding amongst youth and between the generations. The proliferation of information and communication technologies presents both opportunities and challenges in terms of the social development and inclusion of youth.

There is an increasing emphasis on using information and communication technologies in the context of global youth priorities, such as access to education, employment and poverty eradication. In addition, ICTs can create effective channels of cooperation, dialogue and information exchange among young people. As a result, the role of young people in the Information Society is an important one. Young people are potential beneficiaries of increased access to ICT, in particular through improvements in education and social development. Young people may also play an important role in the development of the Information Society, through their ability to learn to use and develop ICT and its applications.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of collecting all important data and information required to be processed for establishment of this report content, secondary data collection is chosen to gather all available information regarding Information Communication and Technology. Different sources from different web sites used to extract and gather all factual information regarding ICT globally. A similar method used to gather all responses from the various stake holders towards the topic. The sources are carefully chosen in order to ensure quality of the content, relevance, and ease of comprehension. Reason of choosing secondary data collection is based on a fact that varieties of sources are largely available in electronic network.

LITERATURE AND FACTUAL REVIEW

IMPORTANT GLOBAL FACTS

- ✚ Approximately one billion youth live in the world today. This means that approximately one person in five is between the age of 15 to 24 years.
- ✚ The number of youth living in developing countries will grow by 2025, to 89.5%.
- ✚ Therefore, it is a must to take youth issues into considerations in the ICT development agenda and ICT policies of each country.
- ✚ For people who live in the 32 countries where broadband is least affordable – most of them UN-designated Least Developed Countries – a fixed broadband subscription costs over half the average monthly income.
- ✚ For the majority of countries, over half the Internet users log on at least once a day.
- ✚ There are more ICT users than ever before, with over five billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide, and more than two billion Internet users.
- ✚ Almost half the world's population is under the age of 25 and nearly a quarter are aged 12 to 24. Of those aged 12-24, nearly 40% live on less than two dollars a day.
- ✚ Youth employment is in crisis according to the ILO, which estimates that some 75 million are out of work as of 2012. That accounts for 41% of total global unemployment, and is not likely to recover until beyond 2016.
- ✚ By end-2013, mobile-cellular subscriptions will reach a penetration of 89% in developing countries. Internet user statistics are also surging, with 2.7 billion (39% of world population) expected to be online by the end of the year.
- ✚ Ongoing ITU research suggests that at present, around 43% of national strategies reference youth.
- ✚ Over the past five years, global fixed-broadband prices as a share of GNI per capita dropped by 82%. By 2012, fixed-broadband prices represented 1.7% of monthly GNI p.c. in developed countries. In developing countries, fixed-broadband services remain expensive, accounting for 30.1% of average monthly incomes.

RESPONSES FROM VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

The information revolution and the extraordinary increase in the spread of knowledge have given birth to a new era--one of knowledge and information which effects directly economic, social, cultural and political activities of all regions of the world, including Africa. Governments worldwide have recognized the role that Information and Communication Technologies could play in socio-economic development. A number of countries especially those in the developed world and some in developing countries are putting in place policies and plans designed to transform their economies into an information and knowledge economy. Countries like USA, Canada, and a number of European countries, as well as Asian countries like India, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, and South American countries like Brazil, Chile, and Mexico among others, and Australia and Mauritius either already have in place comprehensive ICTs policies and plans or are at an advanced stage of implementing these programmes across their economies and societies.

Some of these countries see ICTs and their deployment for socio-economic development as one area where they can quickly establish global dominance and reap tremendous payoff in terms of wealth creation and generation of high quality employment. On the other hand, some other countries regard the development and utilization of ICTs within their economy and society as a key component of their national vision to improve the quality of life, knowledge and international competitiveness. Developing countries must look forward prospectively and participate actively in building technological capabilities to suit their needs. Technology itself also has a role to play in this. Just as technologies create them, so new innovations offer ways of bridging technological divides. Connectivity can build on existing infrastructure or bypass traditional means with technologies such as wireless. The availability of free software is transforming the information technology industry.

GOVERNMENTS RESPONSES

Governments, supported by the international community, as appropriate, should facilitate access to ICT for all youth, including those in difficult -to-reach areas, such as rural areas, and in indigenous communities. Governments should evaluate inequalities in access that exist between urban and rural youth and between young women and men and should develop national strategies to overcome the digital divide in each country, thus decreasing the proportion of youth who have no access to ICT. Governments should develop domestic policies to ensure that ICT is fully and appropriately integrated into education and training at all levels, including in the development of curricula, teacher training and institutional administration and management, as well as in support of the concept of lifelong learning.

Governments, with the support of the international community, should promote and encourage local knowledge systems and locally produced content in media and communications, support the development of a wide range of ICT-based programmes in local languages, as appropriate, with content relevant to different groups of young persons, especially young women, and build the capacity of girls and women to develop ICT. Governments, in collaboration with relevant actors in the information society, should ensure that young people are equipped with knowledge and skills to use ICT appropriately, including the capacity to analyse and treat information in creative and innovative ways, to share their expertise and to participate fully in the information society. Efforts should be made to provide special training courses for in-school and out-of-school youth to enable them to become conversant with ICT and to facilitate their use of such technologies.

Governments should strengthen action to protect youth from abuse and to defend their rights in the context of the use of ICT. In that context, the best interests of youth are a primary consideration. Governments should promote responsible behaviour and raise awareness of possible risks for young people arising from the harmful aspects of ICT in order that they may protect themselves from possible exploitation and injury. Governments, in cooperation with relevant actors in the information society, should strengthen action to protect children and youth from abuse and the harmful impact of ICT, in particular through cybercrimes, including child pornography.

PRIVATE SECTOR RESPONSES

The private sector has been extremely active in developing products and other resources to help users become more secure and gain greater control over their online personal information. Unfortunately, too many users fail to take advantage of these tools. Governments can best promote online security and privacy by educating consumers about the importance of using security- and privacy-enhancing technologies and the need to regularly update their operating systems and other key programs.








Particularly in an age of limited public resources, the private sector must remain the primary engine of ICT-based growth and industrial development. While governments cannot, of course, dictate the course of private-sector investment, it can help channel private-sector investment into pro-growth areas by providing appropriate tax and related incentives for ICT investment. Governments can also encourage foreign investment by providing a regulatory framework that increases predictability and reduces financial risk. To these ends, governments should consider the following measures:

- ✚ *Incentives for private-sector R&D and ICT spending.* Promoting a regulatory environment that values innovation and encourages ICT investment is vital to capitalizing on the potential of ICTs to promote development objectives. Tax credits and other incentives for private-sector R&D will foster innovation, while similar incentives for investments in telecommunications infrastructure will promote broad public access to the benefits of ICTs. To promote productivity growth, businesses and other organizations should be offered financial incentives to invest in ICTs and provide IT training to their employees. Examples of such incentives include tax credits, loans at favourable interest rates, and accelerated depreciation schedules for ICT assets.
- ✚ *Transparent accounting rules.* Investors are less likely to invest in firms whose balance sheet is unclear or whose financial status is less than transparent because such uncertainty raises the level of financial risk. Recent accounting scandals in several nations have only reinforced the importance to investors of open and accurate accounting. Rules that encourage or require firms to adhere to industry-standard accounting principles and provide third-party audits will increase transparency and make domestic ICT firms more attractive to foreign investors.

NGO RESPONSES

Knowing NGO communication capabilities and how they collect and use information is essential to understanding how they operate in support of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) emergencies. Communications are essential during emergencies. NGOs must be able to relay and receive information about constantly changing conditions, needs, operational challenges, and warnings. During emergency operations, information is not only extremely valuable but highly perishable. Timeliness, clarity, and effectiveness of communications are critical when lives are at stake.

As a result, NGOs rely on technology to function and perform well. Within the international community, the collective technical infrastructure of hardware, software, and telecommunications is often referred to as information and communications technology or, more simply, ICT. Many NGOs perceive ICT as an important tool to optimize operations and conduct information exchanges. NGOs are independent entities that manage a variety of programs in emergency settings. They require a broad base of information to secure appropriate resources and carry out operations in harmony with many other organizations. They depend on a variety of information:

-  weather and geographical conditions
-  political, social, and economic developments in a region
-  market prices for commodities, transportation, and shipping
-  NGO and UN activity
-  military activity, plans, or violence
-  population activity, numbers, movement, and trends
-  internal logistical, security, and planning needs

MEDIA RESPONSES

Throughout the twentieth century, people received most of their information by word of mouth and from letters, broadcasters or publishers of newspapers and books. Today, technological development and the increasing availability of the internet have sped up and blurred the distinction between information-creator and information-receiver. Information flows are now broad, diverse, reversible and accessible. The ability of almost anybody to set up a website and begin publishing or broadcasting content has led to fundamental changes in the media. Companies and individuals can publish anything from text or images to a video using high speed and broad bandwidth digital technology.

They can then deliver them direct to computers or mobile devices worldwide. Technological development has led the media to both expand and reduce. Digital transmission has resulted in more and cheaper opportunities for broadcasters, and greater choice for media consumers. Media organisations now disseminate information through a multitude of platforms in order to satisfy their audiences. The media has had to:

- ✚ diversify how it delivers content
- ✚ diversify its speed of delivery
- ✚ Take account of information created increasingly by people outside the media.

Some media organisations have responded by buying large shares of the media landscape. Such mergers can lead to concerns about diversity and plurality. 'Citizen Journalism' has developed and includes bloggers, social media users and other 'non-professional' information sources. Traditional media organisations no longer serve as gatekeepers and information has been democratised.

YOUTH RESPONSES

Young people are rising to the challenge by pioneering the use of ICT, and driving trends in what is a dynamic and major growth industry. While the good news is that they are using ICT the challenge is to inspire them to use it to change their world in a positive way. National and international policy and regulatory bodies like governments, civil society and the UN can help by recognizing and encouraging the accelerated use of information and communication technologies in development strategies and frameworks for the future. With ICTs playing a crucial role in applications across the world and at either end of the development spectrum, and with such a high impact on young people, their explicit reference in such strategies is essential. While access to technology and associated electronic content has significantly changed the lives of many young people in developed countries, this is not always the case for those in less developed countries.

Access to ICTs such as computers, mobile phones and the Internet, especially broadband, remains a challenge for youth in the developing world. In addition, the cost of ICT access (mobile phones and Internet) is much higher as a proportion of per capita income in these particularly disadvantaged countries. The challenge is bringing together all relevant stakeholders, including governments, civil society and the private sector, and encouraging them to work together to provide an environment that fosters the development of young people and enables them to realize their potential in the Information Society. ICTs transcend borders enabling the communication between young people from every corner of the world, helping in the promotion of dialogue and mutual understanding. It is important then that international cooperation in regards to the transfer of technology is fostered.

CONCLUSION

The knowledge society/the digital economy and the ubiquitous use of ICTs in almost every aspect of human life has made it necessary for people to have digital skills to effectively use, create and innovate with ICTs. Moreover, a growing number of jobs across all sectors require ICT skills, which has led many experts to conclude that ICT and digital skills are key to successful participation in the labour market. Despite this need, the promise of ICTs has not been realized in formal educational systems. Research by the OECD illustrates the limitations in traditional models of education, as they are not adequately preparing students to meet the demands of a changing job market. Furthermore, seizing the potential of ICTs for education requires the development and implementation of national policies/programmes aimed at integrating ICTs in education as a whole, and better responding to labour market needs.

It thus requires a coordinated approach across various ministries and levels of government. In some countries ministries of labour, telecommunications, youth or human development, education and even industry work together to identify common areas of interest and targeted activities. Promoting ICT skills development in extracurricular educational settings shows that one can acquire ICT skills almost anywhere. These are out-of-classroom opportunities which governments need to pay attention to and support if they want to foster an ICT-savvy, innovative labour force. To date, most activities have been supported and initiated by non-government entities and the private sector. What is needed now is for governments at all levels to take proactive steps to take advantage of these efforts.

Recommendation

Responses of World Assembly of Youth

The World Assembly of Youth at the centre of youth service organises year round events to tackle youth issues. One of the prominent is the annual event known as Melaka International Youth Dialogue (MIYD). In 2003 WAY organised MIYD with the theme Youth and Information Technologies (ICTs) for Development. The event brought together youth and youth leaders from different countries to convene and tackle the issue. A declaration was drafted and sent to National Youth Councils, and governments as suggestions to adopt into their policies.

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