Improving Rural Communications: Policies, Strategies and Regulatory Interventions

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Life in Rural Areas

Village life

Core Activities
Traditional Village Communications Options

• Face-to-face exchanges (via demonstration and village meetings)
• One-way print media
  – Newspapers
  – Newsletters
  – Magazines
  – Journals
  – Posters
• One-way telecommunication media
  – Non-interactive radio
  – Television
  – Satellite
  – Loud-speakers mounted on cars
• Two-way media
  – Telephone
• Theatre
• Poetry
• Music
• Village announcer
• Telecentres
• Others ……

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Makes possible the expansion of social networks beyond the immediate neighborhood

To ensure innovation are embraced and widespread

Better coordination of key village activities

Awareness raising

Timely access to information

Diffusion of information

Accelerated socio-economic development
Challenges to Rural Communications

- Absence of providers
- Lack of well developed communication infrastructure
- Vast, heterogeneous and diversely spread audiences
- Limited income sources
- Poverty
- Low literacy level
- Variations in language
- Sustainability issues
- Poor media reach
Model Rural Communication Projects

- The Grameen Bank Village Phone in Bangladesh
- The Telecentre Concept
- N-Logue Multi-tier franchise model in India
- GIFEC’s CIC Initiative
- Mobile Money in Rural Areas
  - M-PESA in Kenya
  - Easypaisa in Pakistan
  - G-Cash in the Philippines
  - Bancosol in Bolivia
  - MTN Mobile Money Service
  - Airtel Zap Service
- Funding of low-cost devices with computing and communication capabilities in India
  - Cost of tablet device commonly known as the “Sakshat” (“before your eyes”) provided to school children by the Indian government. Currently stands at $35, but projected to decline to Us$10.
Policies & Strategies

We need to run/leapfrog with the technology
Potential ‘potholes’ to be avoided
“Access” in Relation to Universal Service vs. Universal Access

- Universal access, a policy objective more typical for developing countries, seeks to expand the geographic access to ICTs of the population at large, and often for the very first time. UA obligations provide for a minimum coverage, especially of remote communities, thereby allowing all citizens to “use the service, regardless of location, gender, disabilities, and other personal characteristics.

- Universal Service, a policy objective primarily used in developed countries focuses on upgrading and extending communication networks so that a minimum level of service is delivered to individual households, even in the least accessible areas.

- The two are intrinsically linked to each other, as Universal Access is the pre-cursor for Universal Service.

- UAS policies and strategies go beyond telephony, and include at least data and Internet communications, and increasingly look towards broadband communication.

- UA and US can largely be characterized by the availability, accessibility and affordability of telephony and the Internet, with increasing consideration of the inclusion of broadband and broadcasting.
Policy and Regulatory Issues

• Simplification of the licensing process
  • Excessive licensing can stifle initiative
  • The Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore issues simplified licenses to facilitate-based operators (FBOs) and services-based operators (SBOs) of telecommunications networks.
• Development of a robust communication infrastructure
• Consumer protection regulation
  • E.g., gaps between advertised “headlines” broadband access speeds and what subscribers actually experience
• SMS pricing
• Changing role of the public sector
  • From an early monopolistic stage after WWII to private participation, considered better equipped to deliver value and efficiency
• Taxes on communication services (i.e., import duties in ICT equipment)
Role-Independent Contractors (Agents) (IC)

- Promotes and recruits students
- Assist in planning and organising promotional events
- Assist students to complete application forms
- Attend educational fairs on behalf of GTUC when need be, depending on where it is organized in the country
- Assist GTUC staff with attending educational fairs when need be
- Present list of students and invoice to GTUC for payments
Recommendations

- Community Radio
- Wireless communications
- Creation of Rural Information Technology
  Administration under the Local Government Ministry
- Rural Utilities Services
- Rural Services Commission
- Participatory Development Communication model
Participatory Development Communication

- Refers to the use of communication to facilitate social development.
- It is a process that emphasizes a two-way communication process based on sharing ideas and information in order to improve the quality of life of the stakeholder communities.
- Is about aiding different types of actors interested in understanding needs and assessing opportunities jointly.
- It engages stakeholders and policy makers, establishes conducive environments, assesses risks and opportunities and promotes information exchanges to bring about positive social change via sustainable development.
Participatory Development Communication

Cont’d

• Techniques include
  • information dissemination and education
  • social marketing
  • social mobilization
  • media advocacy
  • communication for social change
  • community participation
... to having the courage and self confidence to take risks!
Thank you
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