

First call for papers

The IFIP WG9.4 Conference on ICTs and Development: New Opportunities, Perspectives & Challenges

29–31 May 2002, Bangalore, India

http://is.lse.ac.uk/ifipwg94/Conference2002/first_call.htm

Early encounters of developing countries with ICTs were characterized by uncertainty of meeting with an unfamiliar or alien tool and were distinguished by rare successes and apprehensions of increasing the developmental divide. Subsequently, as greater consensus emerged on the potential of these technologies, the focus was one of localizing associated methodologies and work practices. Increasingly, however, the potential for enablement and participation in new economic and governmental systems is visible. Some of these have been in terms of opportunities for developing countries provided by new economies for which the conference city of Bangalore with its cluster of software service providers and global software companies is a well-publicised example. At a micro level, ICTs are providing opportunities for individuals and small firms to participate in economies at a local or larger scale.

ICTs, in addition, provide the unique potential to enable and sustain communicative participatory processes at global and local levels. Increasing access to information and communication media has often enabled small groups and individuals to be heard on global debates and forums. They have enabled small cultural and ethnic groups to overcome disadvantages of physical distance. At a more local level they are enabling creation of a virtual 'public place' wherein effective democratic processes of public participation can take place. For instance, in many developing countries, local government authorities are actively considering using ICTs as a means to catalyse initiatives towards democratic decentralization and the empowerment of citizens to participate in the process of design and delivery of civic services. These attempts of using ICTs are part of a broader agenda of democratic reform in local governance and typically include a number of other initiatives such as the formation of decentralized committees, reforms in systems of administration and privatisation of civic services.

On the other hand, many of the old challenges in terms of inappropriate focus and resource allocation remain. The cost of missed opportunities is also increasing. Limitations of existing structures and decision making processes at higher levels in conjunction with greater demands placed on them increase the risk of a reverse spiral of enlarging deprivation. Addressing these challenges is an essential part of the ongoing debate. We aim to address these issues and also the evident tension that exists for developing countries as they try to balance global and local priorities through the adoption and use of ICTs.

This conference, therefore, aims to examine the new opportunities, perspectives and challenges provided by information and communication technologies for developing countries in terms of the following sub-themes:

- *Participation in global economic activity*: What are the factors influencing the development of high-technology industrial activity in developing countries? How have companies in developing countries used ICTs to participate as vendors of goods and services in the global marketplace? What have been the constraints in realising this opportunity? What occupations and skills are driving the IT industry, and what skills are no longer sought? To what extent does participation in new economic systems provide spin-offs for the domestic user base within developing countries, for example in the public sector? How might the influx of venture capital in developing countries alter the geographic profile of the Internet economy? How to theorise about the relationship between IT-led global economic activity and socio-economic development within the developing countries?
- *Emergence of new organisational types*: What have been the experiences of individuals and small groups like NGOs advocating developing country point-of-view in using new infrastructures to access global platforms? To what extent are Internet-based organisations characterised by the specific culture and context in different developing country settings? To what extent have new technologies enabled individuals and non-traditional groups to participate in governance at local and national levels? How to theorise about impact of these new organisational types which rely on information technology and networks on social and political systems in developing countries?
- *Local governance and socio-economic development*: How can we characterise new local governance structures emerging in many parts of the developing world? What is the role of the private sector in these structures? What has been the experience of non-governmental organisations in mediating between citizen groups and structures of governance? In what ways have these technologies enabled improvements in availability of health services, education and economic opportunities to economically disadvantaged areas and groups? In what ways are communities and social interactions changing in response to innovations in ICTs? Are there any measurable changes? How can we theorise about the tension facing planners in developing countries as they try to mediate between the need to participate in new economic systems and socio-economic priorities?

Submission: We are interested in receiving research papers, research-in-progress reports, case studies and proposals for tutorials and panel discussions, which fall within one or more of the conference themes. Submissions should be sent to either of the two Conference and Programme Chairpersons:

S. Krishna, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore
Shirin Madon, London School of Economics and Political Science

Important dates:

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| Deadline for receipt of full papers: | 31 August 2001 |
| Notification of acceptance of papers: | 31 December 2001 |
| Camera ready manuscript due from authors: | 28 February 2002 |

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