Deepening Participation and Improving Aid Effectiveness through Media and ICTs

A Practical Manual Translating Lessons Learned into Daily Practice

SDC Working Paper

Title photo:
Exclusion from decision-making processes is a key characteristic of poverty. Applying Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Media as an enabling tool can help address this gap. For instance, interactive Community Radio Stations can - alongside broadcasting the usual mix of music and news- encourage debate between the community and decision-makers on issues of concern. Through listener's clubs and phone-ins, different voices are included in the debate at local level while being amplified to the national and global level through applying various ICT and media channels. In this picture, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India is collecting and debating issues of its members which are captured for a community radio broadcast, distributed widely among its members, uploaded to the internet and published in newspapers to be brought to the attention of local and national authorities.

Executive Summary

After more than ten years of support in the realm of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Development, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has looked back: What do we really know about ICTs, and how can those insights be made useful for the daily practice of development cooperation and particularly in governance programs to enhance voice and accountability? A critical review of project reports, studies, and evaluations was conducted to distil lessons learned and find out what really works and why.

The results of this review are close to a paradigm shift:

- Starting as a magic solution from its beginnings, ICTs are now considered as just another normal media channel useful for enhancing the effectiveness of development cooperation programs.

- It is not the technology that counts; it is the economic and social processes behind the technology that drives the change.

- Thus, ICTs are instrumental, not a goal in itself, and they should serve to improve the practice of development cooperation.

- The once harsh contrast between ICTs and old media is already close to be overcome, and both are seen as just different instruments for different purposes applicable to different target groups.

- To reach the poor and marginalized and get their participation ensured ('voice'), radio is still the most appropriate media channel, at best combined with mobile telephony, to which all segments of society are increasingly gaining access.

- Internet and PCs are more appropriate for the urban elite, for NGOs and other intermediaries to the poor and marginalised.

- Thus a target group specific approach to ICTs and media is the most promising for improving development cooperation projects.

This operational manual, conceptualized as a SDC working paper, summarizes these and many other lessons learnt from existing studies, evaluations, and literature on ICTs for Development and identifies current deficiencies in the field. It draws practical conclusions for the work of SDC operational units and its partners, and makes suggestions on how ICTs and media should be used, both in classical development programs (health, rural development and climate change) and for enhancing governance and accountability.

The authors intend for operational units to refer to this manual particularly during the designing of country strategies and planning of cooperation projects, as media and ICTs are often overlooked as practical tools for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of projects, despite their promising potential. The manual provides ideas, opportunities, and options on what can be useful for whom and why.

Furthermore, based on its project experiences, SDC suggests considering that ICTs and media become an strategically integrated part of standard planning processes at project and policy level for operational units and partners.

Editorial

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The concerns of rural women in West Africa are recorded during a cultural celebration, broadcasted and debated on the local community radio station, fostering voice and participation.

Source: AMARC 2009.

Introduction

After more than ten years of support for a people-centered approach to embedding modern ICTs within Poverty Alleviation Programs, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has reviewed project reports, study program evaluations and meta-evaluations, in order to distil lessons learned on how ICTs can really help to improve development cooperation programmes and more particularly to enhance voice and accountability programs.

SDC has been among the pioneers in supporting the use of modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for strengthening and improving development cooperation, supporting good governance, and making the voices of the poor and marginalised heard in national and international public discourses. In cooperation with other donors, SDC has also invested in elaborating practical lessons learned through evaluating the work of various ICT for development initiatives.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a tool box for operational units at SDC, its partners and external parties. It should inform about **how** to use ICTs strategically (in combination with old media) for improving development processes. It aims at strengthening the effectiveness both in classical development programmes and in governance-related programmes, i.e. enhancing democratisation and making the voices of the poor and marginalised[1] heard as major tools for achieving poverty reduction.

The Manual/Tool box is based on former evaluative studies on ICTs for Development, programme evaluations, experiences of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and scientific literature on how ICTs can and have effectively contributed to better participation, especially by the poor and marginalised. This body of experience was complemented with current knowledge on journalism, media and communication mainly within developing countries.

The paper starts with a few clarifications on concepts and definitions moving on to explain our current knowledge (and its deficiencies) on ICTs in development. It then lists major insights on how to use ICTs in combination with old media and tailor efforts for different topics and target groups. Finally, we invite operational units to look at the practical opportunities to use ICTs and media within different fields.

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1   During the course of this text, "poor" and "poor and marginalised" will be used interchangeably.

A. Important Definitions

What are ICTs?

The usual understanding of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is the package of 'new' communication technologies consisting of the Internet, the PC, and the mobile phone which then enabled applications like the World Wide Web, Email, blogs, electronic archives, Web 2.0, as well as the wide range of social media (Facebook, Twitter). Some studies also include 'old' electronic media under ICTs, i.e. radio and television, supported by the fact that digitalization provides opportunities for easy exchange between various media types ('media convergence'). Nevertheless, and without going into further discussion, the current understanding of most NGOs and donors is to differentiate ICTs from the old, traditional media (radio, TV, and print) and moving into a fruitful discussion of whether and how they should/can be combined.

Why are ICTs important for development cooperation?

ICTs provide opportunities for more effective development cooperation for mainly two reasons. One is simply **information**. Information is delivered by government and development agencies to target groups/beneficiaries/stakeholders. This helps to improve the effectiveness of operations and strengthens the achievement of results. In some programmes information is at the core of the projects, for example in health programmes that attempt to convince people to change their health protection behaviour. In others it is an important component by providing **access to knowledge**, for example in increasing agricultural productivity, where farmers will not only need better fertilizers or better access to land, but also sound information on new techniques or seeds, or land rights. This kind of information delivery is not completely new to development cooperation, but with ICTs it is expected that it can be spread faster, easier, more tailor-made while reaching larger audiences.

The second application for ICTs in development is **communication**. It stresses that through using ICTs, 'the poor and marginalised' or 'target groups' of development cooperation will start a communication process that makes them more aware of their problems, their potential for self-help and change possibilities, which in turn empowers them to take appropriate action. **Participation** lies at the heart of this process. The focus on this participatory communication lies within enhancing local and bottom-up movements that challenge governments to become more responsive and to improve a given situation.

There are different operational labels to describe this **participatory communication approach**. For instance, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) labels it 'communication for development (ComDev)', defining this as

"a participatory approach that integrates the use of communication strategies, media and processes to enable people and institutions to share knowledge and information and reach consensus towards common action."
(FAO 2010)

The London-based Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Panos calls it 'voice' or 'participatory communication' (in contrast to 'transmitting information') while the New York based Consortium for Communication for Social Change and UNICEF call is "Communication for Social Change" and UNDP 'Communication for Empowerment' (C4E).

Within SDC, the term **"ICT-enhanced communication and voice for development"** (C4D) evolved. Recognizing that exclusion (i.e. voicelessness) from decision-making processes is a key characteristic of poverty, SDC conceptualized its Module "ICT-enhanced Voice and Communication for Development" (SDC 2006). The aim was to introduce the appropriate application of ICTs within established C4D processes in order to strengthen the capacity of poor and marginalised people to articulate their concerns, amplify their voices while contributing to a more favorable policy environment (Davies 2002). Thus, 'voice' goes beyond the project level and points to establishing genuine participation on national level and in government policy.

For the purposes of this working paper no distinction will be made among the different definitions mentionned above.

ICTs, media and country ownership: Accra

In this participatory sense, ICTs can also contribute to achieve 'country ownership', which according to the High Level Meeting in Accra in September 2008, is among the three most important preconditions for development. The Accra Consensus has established a range of technical measures such as making greater use of developing countries systems to deliver aid, and increasing the predictability of aid flows, in order to get the developing countries into the driver seat of the development process. But some authors go beyond those technical measures arguing that the "Accra - Agenda for Action" calls explicitly for combating the social and political exclusion of the poor and marginalised, and for true participation of the people in governing processes (Booth 2008). Within this understanding 'voice' and 'participatory communication' are essential for achieving country ownership (Deane 2008). It should strengthen the true inclusion and participation of the population in politics as well as the political commitment to genuine development by the government/political elite.

B. What Do We Know After More Than Ten Years of Support for ICTs for Development?

1. From euphoria to reality based assessment

With the start of the massive proliferation of the Internet and the inception of the mobile telephony revolution more than ten years ago, modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have started to become integrated in development cooperation. Bridging the 'digital divide' was and still is an endeavour to make modern technology available for developing countries. The two World Summits on the Information Society in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005) were an expression of this worldwide interest.

Huge efforts in building infrastructure for using ICTs (Internet, mobile telephony) were conducted with the aim for developing countries and its people to become more able to use the emerging 'new' features of ICTs such as searching information, sending text messages and Emails, receiving tailor-made information, actively publishing information, blogging, and later different social media.

In the first years of supporting the use of those modern ICTs development agencies had utterly high expectations, sometimes even euphoria: ICTs were perceived as a miracle tool for solving the problems of underdevelopment and ultimately achieving both poverty reduction and good governance at once and for all in a short time.

"…we believe that the more recent attention to ICTs has to do with the constant search for the magic solution … despite years of research that tell us that information is necessary but insufficient to bring about this change, ICTs have become the most recent iteration of the holy grail for development"
(Ogan et al. 2009: 666).

This kind of technologically-driven euphoria has meanwhile come to a hold, conceding space to a more sober and self-critical view at the obvious opportunities and limits of ICTs in achieving development objectives.

"In the 1990s, ICT enthusiasts were over-optimistic that technologies themselves would transform societies. Many projects such as rural telecentres were established, with often disappointing results. Experience showed that there are many barriers to using a technology: cost and reliability, skills and management, lack of useful content, or a lack of fit between the new technologies and the existing communication needs and flows of the target community." (Panos 2007: 8)

Due to those initially disappointing results (at least measured against high expectations) various studies have been commissioned by donors, assessing ICTs for Development initiatives for helping to achieve:

- 'classical' social and economic objectives of development cooperation (poverty reduction, health status, income generation, provision of education, water supply, etc.) and

- democratic participation objectives, mainly of the poorest strata of society as a way for achieving good governance, a responsive government and accountability of the state.

In the same endeavour various NGOs and think tanks, engaged with ICT and media, were eager to produce lessons learned by looking critically at their own initiatives. Most remarkably a specific initiative partially funded by SDC including donors and NGOs to evaluate the impact of ICTs in development (Building Communication Opportunties, BCO Initiative).

2. Access to ICT and old media - the status quo

Before stating lessons from those studies a short overview should be given to the current status quo of access to different kinds of ICTs and media.

2.1 ICTs

Mobile phones: The true revolution has been the mobile telephony, especially in many developing countries where the land lines had traditionally been in a poor state. Although the usage of mobile telephony accounts for a considerable amount of available income, especially among the poor and marginalised, the number of mobile phones is still increasing considerably:

- Mobile subscriptions in Africa rose from 23 million to almost 350 million between 2002 and 2008, the quickest growth in the world. (Smith 2009)

- On average there are now 48 mobile subscriptions for every 100 people in developing countries – more than eight times the level of penetration in 2000.

Given these trends it will not take long until the developing world will reach a status in which everybody will have access to a mobile phone. The mobile revolution has strong social consequences: Now, even the very poor and marginalised people have access to a personalized channel to the outside world. Many mobiles have a widely used radio application, breaking the longstanding monopoly of the (male) household head in owing a radio set.

Internet: The Internet has been on the increase as well, but the number of people with Internet access is still low throughout developing countries.

- While more than half of the developed world population is now online, the corresponding share is 15% in developing economies (ITU 2010).

- In Africa the figure stands currently at 9.6% which is considerable progress - compared to the below 1%-figure in 2002 - but still limited, illustrating the persisting digital divide in terms of internet access.

- Additionally, access is geographically and socially biased: For example Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, and Tunisia account for 90% of all subscriptions in Africa. There is also a large gap in terms of broadband speed and cost, which in some African countries belong to the most expensive in the world.

2.2. Old media

Radio: Radio is still the most important medium to reach large segments of populations, especially in rural regions of Africa. After the liberalization of the airwaves and the introduction of more liberal press freedom laws, many radio stations have been founded since the mid-1990s, and many of them broadcast nowadays in vernacular languages, reaching the majority of the rural population. Radio is the medium that causes discussions directly after consumption – as it is often listened to while travelling (buses) or in the workplace (breaks), at taxi waiting stands, or in the family (Greene 2008).

Radio is also regarded as suitable to reach the larger parts of societies with a large share of poor and marginalised people. It is a cheap medium that can penetrate even remote areas; any individual can receive it regardless of literacy or education level; rural radio provides region specific information, easily incorporates local concerns and feedback and can operate in local languages.

"Until other ICTs can replicate these advantages at the same cost, then it is likely that radio will continue to be the most relevant technology for the rural poor."
(BCO 2008: 63)

Additionally, one has to keep in mind that a lot of new vernacular radio stations have come up or are close to do so. They reach new audiences that formerly almost never belonged to any media audience such as segments of the poor rural women, or rural marginalized groups.

TV: Television has now become more popular in urban areas of developing countries, as cheaper receiver sets are available, and electricity supply has become more reliable. TV stations have flourished in many developing countries. Legislation permitting, in some urban areas of developing countries the television has replaced the radio as the most important and mostly used information provider.

Nevertheless, in many developing countries the state still exercises strong control on TV airwaves and restricts media freedom and founding of new private stations. International Satellite TV stations like CNN or Al-Jazeera are widely used, especially when domestic programming of national stations is low.

Print media: Newspapers and magazines are increasing in developing countries due to rising numbers of people with higher educational levels. Nevertheless, it is still considered the medium of the elite and the educated, although many poor and marginalised people use it if access is possible.

3. Main insights and lessons learned

This sub-chapter provides main lessons from reviewed studies, taking into consideration the status quo of access to ICTs and old media.

3.1. The mobile telephony revolution offers a new direct and inter-active communication channel to individuals (one-to-one) or groups (group text messages) in developing countries, and even to very poor people.

This new opportunity has been already used by a lot of social and economic development initiatives, for example by providing price information to fishermen and merchants, by offering weather and other agricultural information to farmers, or by sending compliance medication recalls to patients. However, this individual tailor-made channel to an immense part of the population is an opportunity so far not fully and sufficiently used by development agencies.

3.2. ICTs contribute to economic efficiency and better service delivery as they lower business transaction and administration costs.

Compared to former working methods or communication channels, electronic files storage, price inquiry via mobile, contacting customers via websites, and money transfers on Internet or mobile phone are cheaper and more labour efficient, both in administration and business. Finding a file (for car registration, land titles, tax payments etc.) was often next to impossible in many developing countries, as long as files were physically stored in weakly organised archives. With introducing ICTs, an opportunity for improved service delivery has opened up. That doesn't guarantee good services, but the likelihood of better quality has increased.

3.3. It is not the new ICT technology that brings success; it is the economic or social idea behind the technical solution that counts.

For a long time a technologically-centred focus on ICTs has prevailed. It was assumed that technical solutions like mobile phone or Internet yield automatically and directly social, economic or even political effects. That view has changed: The idea and the push for innovative solutions is not provided by technology but by social, economic, political or civil society actors and organisations.

An example from the business world

Banking by mobile phone has become very popular in Kenya. The already existing availability of the mobile access to almost everybody (especially the poor) in Kenya made it profitable for innovative telephone companies to enter the banking business. The financial needs of large parts of the population – for example in transferring small money to and receiving from family members, spread in various parts of the country - were formerly almost completely neglected by the established banking sector. The main phone providers established a system with electronic bank accounts connected to individuals' mobile phones. The new service is called M-Pesa, which means M(obile)-Money in Suaheli. The system allows individuals to cheaply transfer money to any other mobile phone. Money received by phone can then be 'cashed' in at any M-Pesa store, found now all over the country.

In all these initiatives a solid social organisation needs to be behind the technical service, as any website, mobile tool, or other service needs to be run by somebody who collects, reviews, assesses and re-compiles all sorts of information. In short, the service itself is key, while the technology used to provide it needs to be appropriately chosen depending on the target group.

3.4. People first, technology second - Social processes are much more important for stimulating change than technology.

The importance of social processes for achieving change is obvious. For example, in health communication aiming at achieving behaviour change, it needs much more than specific messages delivered by a specific technology. Instead, a social process with community and peers needs to be triggered, sometimes even challenging power relations:

"Firstly, people learn more effectively and adopt new ideas as their own when they learn from their peers, ... rather than when they passively receive information from outside. Secondly, if a development strategy requires communities to adopt new habits or systems ... the new system is more likely to be accepted and successful if people have built 'ownership' by participating in identifying and setting it up themselves. The communication process has to be much more than simply telling people that something is happening. Thirdly, it is not easy for individuals to adopt new personal behaviour unless the culture they are part of also changes: safe sex, for instance, has to become the norm in a young man's peer group before he will practise it himself; Any effort to change individuals' behaviour has to target the whole community."
(Panos 2007: 26)

3.5 The suitability of ICTs and old media differs largely for different users.

As the former technologically-centred approach to ICTs was replaced by the people-centred approach (SDC 2006), naturally the question came up what the specific information and communication channels of different target audiences are.

▶ **Personal computers (PCs) and Internet are mainly not suitable for the poor.**
Although it was one of the big expectations that PCs and the Internet might help the poorest of the poor directly, it needs to be acknowledged that Internet connectivity is still low in developing countries and especially among the poorest of the poor. As internet access is costly and requires a fair degree of (mostly English) literacy and information competencies, the Internet is mostly used by the affluent political elite, donors and staff of modern NGOs.

▶ **Communication technologies like radio and mobile phones are much more suitable for poor people compared to information-processing technology like PCs and the Internet.**
The BCO (2008) study – the major donor funded contribution to the ICTs for development debate – has clearly stated that the poorest of the poor do not and cannot use the Internet appropriately and are better served by trusted community institutions and intermediaries.

> *"Evidence suggests that the information needs of the poorest will be met more by informal, "organic" information systems that are locally contextualised than by formal, ICT-based information systems ... This may come about through interaction between communities and community members rather than from the typical ICT-based pattern of data transfer."*
> *(Duncombe 2008: 70)*

The BCO study claims that new information must be provided by technology that can be easily integrated into existing ones, and by technology that offers the most affordable access. Thus, radio and mobile phone are better suitable for the poor. Based on this fundamental insight, Ducombe claims that Internet and PCs should be used by information intermediaries ('infomediaries') that compile and assemble information for the poor, and that the poor are reached by and communicate themselves via radio and mobile.

> *"ICTs [the author refers to Internet and PC, not to mobile phones] can be of greatest value to provide information from and about the poorest. To do this the poorest need 'infomediaries' to use ICTs. ... Indeed, ICTs currently have a far greater enabling value in building capacity within intermediary institutions – in 'helping the helpers' – than in directly affecting the poorest."*
> *(Duncombe 2008: 70)*

3.6. The divide between 'modern ICTs' and 'old media' has come to an end. ICTs are most probably more effective in an intelligent combination with other media.

Based on those insights described above it becomes obvious that a combination of Internet, PCs, mobile and old media offers a range of advantages to foster interactivity and participation when its use is prudently tailored for the right purposes and the right target groups.

▶ **Combining radio and mobile phones**
To reach the poor and marginalised and support their communication needs, the radio - in combination with mobile phones - is rather well suited. For poverty reduction purposes radio is very effective for dissemination of information, gathered from different sources and then redistributed widely. This makes it also advisable to equip radio stations with Internet access for exactly the purpose of gathering information from a fair diversity of sources and assemble it for their audience.

On the other side, radio is effective for communication for and by the poor, especially in combination with mobile phones. Radio can work for communicating to the poor as well as for communicating among the poor and between the poor and the government. Using mobile phones, callers from the poor strata of society can 'phone-in' into radio magazines or send text messages to the presenter, making their comments and their opinion known. This has become a very popular radio format in Africa. The radio enhances public debates as it collects popular feedback and airs the views of various groups. This is by far not a negligible contribution to democratization processes.

Project Example SDC with IICD in Burkina Faso: Embedding Interactive Community Radio within Women's Association PaglaYiri

PaglaYiri is a large Women's Association in rural Burkina Faso active in agricultural production and rural livelihood issues. One key challenge within their daily work was how to overcome the information and communication deficit due to the large rural dispersion of its members. It was difficult to reach members in order to provide more frequent and timely access market information (prices) or knowledge to improve their agricultural production methods. Consequently, the Association decided to introduce an interactive community radio to serve the information and communication needs of its members. SDC, through IICD, supported this endeavor which included going beyond infrastructure and hardware to include capacity development (training) of community members to utilize the tool and to create content. As an unintended consequence, the community radio became more than just a one-way instrument to transmit information. It has evolved into an interactive platform where issues beyond agriculture are discussed within the community. In sum, through interactive programming and listener's clubs, the radio has become a **public space** to engage the members within the community to debate issues important to them (e.g. bad roads or lack of access to drinking water), **channel** their views and concerns to local decision-makers and through this process providing marginalized groups with an enhanced **voice** in decision-making processes.

The combination of ICTs and mass media is as well recommended for urban areas or the modern sectors of developing countries. For instance regime critical messages get a far larger outreach when different media work together. It might be the case, that opposition leaders can use the Internet or Email to inform the mass media. If they in turn then broadcast the messages to larger audiences, the political effect is much broader compared with the message circulates only in small elitist audience (Greene 2008: 22). However, one has to keep in mind that this also works the other way round. Hate messages were distributed widely via SMS during post-election violence in Kenya in 2007, as well as messages to stop violence.

▶ **Supporting the Internet for participation and democracy addresses mainly intermediaries**
The use of Internet is also encouraged for influencing political processes. However, this does not work for all citizens, but only for the well-educated strata of society such as elites, civil society and policy makers. The BCO study says that Internet and PCs are mostly appropriate for intermediaries, like media and civil society organisations. Some applications of Internet and PCs are highly conducive for challenging the government and claiming responsiveness. For example, website based systems of public expenditure or corruption tracking are highly suitable for modern Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Political blogs can contribute to influence agenda setting and opinion building inside the political elite. However, by using the Internet only, this discourse will not trickle down to the population by itself. But if there are social and political actions, grown out of those initiatives, it can also contribute to become a national discussion and nation wide movement. This can in turn strengthen civil society, which can become even stronger when the debates are proliferated by traditional mass media.

3.7. Connectivity is not sufficient; capability needs to be enhanced for enabling the poor using media and other communication channels

Some analysts – mainly of the 'communication for empowerment' approach – point to the fact that...

"In most poorer countries … people lining on poverty do not yet use the media to any great extent to exchange information, communicate their views or participate in public dialogue. They continue to rely on traditional communication forums such as village meetings and market place discussions."
(Gray-Felder and Forde 2010)

Participation in political processes is especially important for the poor and marginalized, but they are often the ones with the least capability to do so. Thus promoting the capacities of a community radio may not be sufficient to enable poor people to use it. To the contrary, it needs more specific support for citizen empowerment processes before participation can take place. Info-intermediaries like NGOs could develop interactive programmes to help poor groups use the media, or be linked to civic education initiatives. Poor people still rely mainly on face-to-face meetings, in villages or public gatherings, in which mainly the chiefs and other eminent persons of the community speak out. In these cases community radio can trigger a dynamic where radio becomes a new channel for leaders supplementing village meetings, and where local initiatives educate people to form listener groups.

3.8. Still little knowledge about effects

Even after considering the latest studies there are still no comprehensive evaluations of the impact of ICTs on voice, participation and democratization. Facing a generally weak evaluation culture in many ICTs for Development projects - no baseline studies prior to inception of projects, weak data collection during implementation, hardly any structured monitoring - the industry so far relies mainly on viewpoints of stakeholders and experts when it comes to outcomes and impacts. Though collecting viewpoints is good, and even essential, it is definitely not sufficient to come up with not only opinion-based results. Evidenced based data is also required.

In the light of this shortcoming, it is not surprising, that most studies, even those labelled as 'evaluations', describe mainly potentials of ICTs and media (they 'can' contribute, they 'could' provide, etc.).

"It is generally felt within the development community that the evidence base for ICD is weaker than it is in most development sectors. Although there is now a good deal of written (academic and institutional) literature about ICD, a high proportion of this is concerned with the potential which its authors (and ICD agencies) feel can be derived from ICTs rather than with the assessment of experience to date."
(BCO 2008: 176)

Thus, BCO concludes that improved planning, preparation, and permanent context analysis are highly needed to enable sound evaluation and gain lessons learned.

C. Practical Consequences – Opportunities for Operational Units

1. General insights and recommendations

What does the former analysis mean for SDC's operational units and partner organisations in their work with project and programmes?

▶ **ICTs and media are instrumental.** The main concern of operational units is achieving social, economic or political goals. ICTs and media only come into focus when operational units assess whether and how projects and programmes might improve effectiveness, outreach, efficiency and sustainability.

▶ **Modern ICTs and old media are one tool box** that offers different instruments for different purposes and target groups. Internet and PCs are generally appropriate instruments for an urban elite, modern CSOs, and literate and educated youth, whereas the radio suits mainly poor, rural audiences. Additionally, the mobile provides meanwhile access to almost everybody. Considering these channels and differentiation of various target groups, a sound analysis of needs and potentials in a particular project and context will tell the operational project manager what kind of ICTs or media or any combination might be useful in a particular case.

▶ **Combining modern ICTs and old media** seems to be the most effective approach, especially the combination of radio and mobile for fostering public discussion and increased inclusion of the poor.

▶ **It is worth to mention that 'voice' and 'participation' can also be supported by means other than ICTs and media,** such as direct support to civil society, support to education and literacy, support to capacity building in administration which are all essential in itself and complementary to media support at the same time. Making a coordinated and coherent support to media, civil society and the state has been recently recommended by a research project, supported by SDC among others (Paffenholz 2009).

▶ **Support to both sides of the equation is needed.** As numerous studies have shown (Paffenholz 2009; Menocal 2009) voice support is more effective when efforts are made to support both the 'voice' side, i.e. strengthening communication by and among poor people, and the 'accountability' side, i.e. the capacity of the state administration to be responsive in the same intervention (Menocal 2009: 3).

The tables on next pages provide recommendations and outline opportunities for different types of projects.

2. Opportunities for SDC operational units and partner organisations

According to prior analysis of needs and potential, activities and programmes of other actors, SDC units and partner organisations have a diverse menu of options to choose from for selecting the appropriate way of support. This Manual distinguishes objectives in classic development cooperation and in Voice, Participation and Accountability programmes. In the following some opportunities for applying ICTs and media are presented, with which programmes can improve their outreach, effectiveness and success.

Table 1: Opportunities for using ICT and media for objectives in development sectors

Health	› Health programme on the (vernacular) radio or on national radio. Call-in programme (via mobile calls, texts, letters) to support participation in the programme. Political talk plus 'ask the expert' etc. › Exchange and Networking of journalists with medical staff/scientists › For participation: Installation of Listener clubs; feedback to radio stations › Websites of specialised NGOs on special health topics for informing media directly or other beneficiaries › Mobile phones as new channels to the poor: Installation of services for reminders for drugs compliance? Tracking patients in remote areas? Alert services via SMS.
Agriculture / Rural Development[1]	› Price information per mobile to small farmers › General agricultural information: Agency provides information on pests and pesticides, veterinary information, weather forecasts; for example by radio or by telecentre that cooperates with radio › Agricultural radio: Tips for farming, discussion with experts and call-in programmes › PC and Internet for rural telecentres: gathering information for special requests from farmers › Agricultural magazine for in-depth information. › Training of journalists: agricultural knowledge, agricultural policy, world markets
Environment and Climate Change[2]	› Environmental programme on radio or TV: raising awareness in different strata of society. › Websites of specialised NGOs on special environmental topics for informing media directly or other beneficiaries › Environmental blog for urban issues (waste management) › Support to civil society organisations: exchange and networking › Exchange and networking journalism/experts
Finances	› Budget monitoring systems and corruption tracking systems › Support websites of those activities › Contribute to business and finance TV or radio programmes: call-ins, experts, discussion. › Support exchange and networking between journalists, government, business and civil society

1   See also the SDC Rural Development Shareweb and its "ICT for Rural Development" Window: http://www.sdc-ruraldevelopment.ch/en/Home/Thematic_basket/Knowledge_and_innovation/ Information_and_Communication_Technology_ICT

2   For ICTs in Climate Change Adaptation Progremmes see Kalas and Finlay, 2009 or Heeks and Ospina, 2009

Projects in voice and participation aim at triggering debate and ultimately political or social action for a particular purpose. Considering ICTs and media to foster participation and voice, development actors need to define from the beginning whose voice they want to support (Menocal 2009). In reality, the voices of the poor are far from homogeneous – and these voices may not necessarily be complementary but actually compete with one another. At least during the planning stages it is necessary to distinguish between elite and non-elite segments of the population, as the two are approached differently. In case some of those discussions, inspired by ICTs and media, have larger outreach and are conducted at the national level, then 'country ownership' is strongly enhanced.

Table 2: Opportunities for using ICT and media in voice, participation and accountability programmes

Foster national or local debate on specific development or governance topics	› Enable blogs and websites for urban/centre discussion inside elite › Support topical programmes in various media (print, TV, radio) for the non-elite part of the population › Journalism training in (development and governance) topic is essential › Support media education (capability to use media) especially for the poor and disadvantaged › National Conferences on topics
Create conducive environment for debate	› Advocacy for media freedom, freedom of information etc. › Defence of human rights › General media support (as for example explained in SDC Media Orientation guide, or Panos, a case for communication, p 44-58) › Strengthen think tanks and civil society (Internet? Networking?) to enable them to bring up topics at least to elite debate and then later to mass media. › Capacity building for poor and marginalized to gain capability to use all media channels › Enhance state administration in their responsiveness to civil society/people's demands
Strengthen specific social action/movement for specific practical change	› Support to media work of those social movement (websites, brochures, PR staff etc.) › Support to info-intermediaries (infrastructure, training etc.) to make sure that all strata of society are well informed.[1] › Support to international networking of that social movement › Journalism training (knowledge) on topic of that social movement › Support to cooperation of various media channels, i.e. networking of advocacy websites and media; TV or radio talk shows pick up discussions from blogs or websites. › Support to listener groups formed around media coverage of these topics
Strengthen local and national administration and feedback mechanisms towards them	› Support PCs and office or data bases software: efficiency of administrative processes is enhanced with PC operated files instead of physical storage (Panos 2007: Box 5 'E-governance in India'). › Support to citizen report card as feedback mechanism › Public Expenditure Tracking Systems
Strengthen feedback from public to websites and media	› Support to ombudsmen in media › Structured feedback mechanism from audience to mass media (phone hotlines; audience reaction programmes)

1 Info-intermediaries are actors or organisations gathering and collecting information on a topic and re-compiling them for different audiences. These can be media staff or CSOs. They might need PC and Internet, but then assemble information for use in all kinds of media, from websites to radio or mobile services.

3. Enabling factors for effectiveness in ICT and media support

As mentioned before ICT and media for development programmes lack genuine evaluation studies. It is not yet exactly known what works and under what conditions. Nevertheless, there are some insights regarding enabling factors for better effectiveness of interventions.

▶ **Media or ICT information is more effective when they can relate and are supported by personal, peer or community communication**
Many development efforts become more effective when they are shared by peers or when people learn from trusted community members. New behaviour is better adopted when culture also changes, and when it is in line with already existing expectations of that community. Therefore, communication projects try to influence communication within the family (health, education), and actual changes are expected to derive from those discussions (Panos 2006: 26-27). Applying this principle to higher levels, it becomes obvious that major challenges of development cooperation, such as considerably changing national policy, need a large effort of debating options. As a consequence, country ownership can emerge.

▶ **ICTs and media need embeddeding in comprehensive social change and action programmes as technology itself will not bring real change.**
Communication and participation are rather futile exercises when not followed by actual change. Any health communication about condom use is helpless when condoms are not available. Media reports on corruption are useless, when the culprits don't face consequences. Thus, it needs social activism and social movement to make ICTs or media useful (Panos 2006: 30; Greene 2008).

▶ **Media need to build trust before they can think of achieving an effect, requiring independent media and ICTs.**
Only trusted media can build effects. It is mainly accuracy and openness that engender trust in media. This has been known for long, but not understood by many politicians that prefer to instrumentalize media directly for their purposes. Serious personal communication can be triggered by trusted media only, and this is one way of media having an (indirect) effect (Greene 2008: 24-26).

A training facilitated by the staff of Kothmale Community Radio (KCR) station in Sri Lanka using the eTUKTUK. The eTUKTUK is a self-contained mobile telecentre and radio broadcasting unit which travels into remote villages in the Kothmale region in Sri Lanka. It provides communities the opportunity to participate in the KCR's programming as well as have access to new digital technologies and internet.

Source: UNESCO / K. Wanniarachi

D. Practical Applications and Next Steps – How to Really Implement?

It is recommended to embed ICTs and media into the standard planning processes of operational units and SDC partners[1], both at project and policy level.

1. Project level

At SDC, this would mean to anchor this within the **"Project Cycle Management (PCM)"** approach. During the analysis stage - conducted by operational units with their partners to identify what kind of changes processes they intend to support - it is already recommended to ask the question **whether the strategic use of ICTs and media could help to achieve intended results** (and hopefully get inspired by the list in Subchapter C.2 «Opportunities for SDC operational units and partner organsiations»):

More specific questions during the **planning** stages could include the following:

• What are the challenges within a particular development program?

• Could Access to Information, Knowledge and Communication play a role in addressing these challenges?

• Could participation and inclusion within the development intervention be enhanced through **"communication for development" processes**? Helpful in finding answers are (in alphabetical order):
- BBC World Service Trust's 5 step approach of "assessing the needs, strengthening local media, creating broadcasting media programming, engaging communities and measuring impact" (BBC WST 2011)
- FAO's comprehensive "ComDev" methodology consisting of six distinct phases applicable throughout the whole project cycle (FAO 2004)
- Panos 4 step approach on "voice, dialogue, media and networked communication" (Panos 2011)
- UNICEF's 5 step approach of "Analysis, Strategic Design, Development & Testing, Implementing & Monitoring, Evaluation and Replanning" (Graeff 2008).

In case of affirmation, some structured media analysis is useful, focussing on:

• What are the existing information and communication **needs** of institutions, partners and beneficiaries?
- UNDP offers a helpful questionnaire for such a „Information and Communication Audit" (Deane, McCall 2006)

• What are the existing information and communication **channels** available? What are the structures in the media sector?
- Guidance is provided by SDC's orientation guide: Media – a Key Player for Realizing Social Accountability (SDC 2007).
- UNESCO's Ethnographic Action Research Handbook on ICTs for Poverty Alleviation with a specific questionnaire (Tachi, Slater, Hearn 2003).

Answering these questions will help to decide which ICT or media tools are appropriate for the specific purposes of the project.

Summarizing, it can be said that the ICTs and media component should be embedded during the planning stages, thus entering into the normal project cycle management (including monitoring and evaluation) as any other element that is deemed useful for the project.

Based on previous project experiences, SDC suggests taking a **strategic approach** when integrating ICTs and media into its development programs, meaning that appropriate tools are embedded and aligned with the strategic objectives of a particular project or programme to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency. Furthermore and among others, the '7 C's approach' - complimentary to infrastructure and connectivity issues - may be helpful when applying such a strategic approach (Kalas 2011).

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1 There is a particular need to **develop the capacities of SDC implementing agencies and partners** to strategically integrate ICTs and media into their programmes, hence a specific dimension needing attention.

2. Policy level

Specific expertise may be needed for such a strategic integration of ICTs and media and there is a number of organisations that can help in this process. In previous SDC partnerships, the following institutions (in alphabetical order and non-exclusive) have been particularly helpful:

- Association for Progressive Communication

- BBC World Service Trust

- International Institute for Communication and Development

- Panos Institute

- UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, Communication for Development Programme

Additional contacts can be found at www.sdc.admin.ch/ict4d, in SDC's media orientation guide (SDC 2007, webliography), the Global Forum on Media Development (www.gfmd.info) and the Communication Initiative (www.comminit.com).

When designing country programs and overall strategies it looks worth the effort to ask whether ICTs and media could play a role among all other important players for fostering democracy (e.g. civil society, parliament, political parties, and the government). Media can be one important component of the enabling environment for democracy and one of the key players for enhancing good governance.

Therefore, the usual context analysis should comprise a **media sector analysis** as well. It should reveal the main problems with media and what kind of media support might be appropriate for the needs of the country. There is a wide range of different opportunities for media support (see Subchapter C.2 «Opportunities for SDC operational units and partner organisations»), and each one has its own specific details to be considered and specific implementation procedures.

At minimum, ICTs and media should at least play a role in the decision what to support. It should not be forgotten that accountability – a major claim of the 'Accra - Agenda for Action' – is not an automatic process, but the result of many efforts. ICTs and media could be an important component of ensuring this kind of true participation.

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