

CSDMS@WSIS

As the development world converged around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), national governments, multilateral organisations and the civil society focused on programmes that harnessed the potential of ICT for strengthening their development initiatives. The second World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), 2005 held in Tunisia showcased these initiatives and deliberated on strategies to support and sustain these initiatives.

With an objective of reviewing processes of ICT integration in Education, 'Innovative ICTs in Education' workshop held on 17 November, 2005 at WSIS Tunis, brought together practitioners and multilateral organisations to discuss the various issues of capacity building, sustainability of initiatives and challenges of scaling up. Organised by the Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies (CSDMS), India, this workshop was a part of the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) Education cluster event.

The workshop showcased case studies from Asia, Latin America and Caribbean and African initiatives. Four panelists discussed three models of ICT in schools. It included ICT enabled project-based curriculum education in Costa Rica presented by Andrea Anfossi of Omer Dengo Foundation; a case study of innovative ICT off-the-curriculum education in development block in a district in India presented by Rumi Mallick from CSDMS; ICT curriculum education in Africa elaborated by Shafika Issacs of SchoolNet Africa. Cédric Wachholz, ICT in Education Unit, UNESCO, Asia Pacific explained UNESCO's engagement in funding and monitoring ICT integration and innovations in education.

The workshop initiated with the case study from India. Rumi (CSDMS) explained how mobile ICTs have been used in off-the-curriculum exercise in Mapping the Neighbourhood project to build capacity and enhance the learning outcomes of students. Andrea (Omer Dengo Foundation) discussed the organisation's country programme on Educational Informatics MEP-FOD for Elementary Schools, effective in Costa Rica. Andrea explained how using the computer as an educational resource, students have learnt through project, programming, interactive resolution of problems, learning by design and collaborative work. Shafika (SchoolNet Africa) elaborated on how SchoolNet has focused on the use of ICT in the integration of education content and curriculum keeping in mind the local capacities and languages, through various programmes. Cédric (UNESCO, Asia Pacific), while explaining the broad role of UNESCO in education, highlighted the pedagogy-technology integration process and emphasised the need for government policy and support from school administration.

Although the scales of the projects discussed varied from each other, the challenges faced in sustaining the programmes had a common thread. Shafika pointed out that the biggest challenge faced was to upgrade a project from a successful pilot phase to a nation-wide programme with necessary government financial

support. All the panellists and the attendees agreed that a government policy for ICT in education is necessary for sustaining any initiative. Rumi pointed out that even when ICT education/training programmes are sustainable through government support, initiatives that focus on using ICT as tools to improve the quality of education are still not a government mandate. Andrea drew attention on the importance of peer-to-peer learning and teachers' training for sustaining initiatives. Cedric reminded that although ICT infrastructure is a crucial factor, incentives to teachers in terms of rewards and recognition also go a long way in the success of a programme.

The second workshop organised on 19 November, 2005, was on 'Capacity building of grassroots practitioners and NGOs for documenting ICT4D projects'. The workshop aimed at identifying the challenges and issues of documenting ICT4D case studies by the practitioners and discussing methods of documentation. Jayalakshmi Chittoor, Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies (CSDMS), India and Saskia Harmsen, International Institute of Communication and Development (IICD), Netherlands were the panelists for the workshop.

The interactive workshop saw participants from India, Pakistan, Ghana, Uganda, South Africa, Canada and Malaysia. The participants who represented practitioners from these countries discussed their documentation challenges. The issues ranged from inadequate connectivity and lack of basic infrastructure in the areas that limited outreach activities, lack of adequate training among the grassroots practitioners and inadequate knowledge on documentation methodologies and tools, inadequate local language tools for documentations and adequate funds for outreach activities. The practitioners pointed out that the lack of documentation tools limits their outreach and leaves their mandates unfulfilled.

Saskia Harmsen, (IICD), Netherlands elaborated her experience with the IICD partners and grassroots practitioners. Giving examples from Media ICT Network for Development (MIND), Africa, she pointed out that there is a definite need of capacity building of the practitioners to share their stories. She highlighted the fact that documentation by journalists of case stories are often focused on only success stories and often misses out the element of lessons learnt from failures.

Jayalakshmi Chittoor (CSDMS) elaborated various documentation and outreach tools available like Internet, discussion groups, blogs and others that will help in outreach. Practitioners can use these tools to discuss their problems and learn from peers. She also pointed out that where developing writing skills is difficult, video, camera, recorders and other media tools can be used to record and document field stories. The discussing concentrated on the choice of documentation tools for specific cases, mainly in areas that have constraints of infrastructure and connectivity. ■