

Information Society - Next Steps?



In the lead-up to the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Phase II in November 2005, the Development Gateway's Special Report on "Information Society: The Next Steps," lets the development community speak out providing an easily readable overview of how the information

society landscape is changing in the developing world including a commentary on what lies ahead. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are transforming today's approach to development. Access to these technologies is spreading rapidly and new applications that can catalyze development are being integrated in many fields from HIV/AIDS programs to microfinance and banking access for rural areas. Often, the most promising applications originate in the developing world.

This year, the number of Internet users in developing countries is crossing the 500 million mark, surpassing industrial nations for the first time. By some estimates, more than 75% of the world's population now lives within range of a mobile network.

Yet, on a global scale, the promise of ICT's impact is still to be realized, and is found today in pockets of success. Following on the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) of December 2003, WSIS-II will assess progress and prompt further global action to increase the integration of ICT in development work and broaden the benefits to all. In preparation, this Special Report gathers expert experience and input on effective policies, promising applications and innovative business models.

This online Special Report will look at how the ICT landscape is changing in the developing world and what lies ahead. Experts from governments, NGOs and the private sector speak out about effective policies, promising applications and innovative business models. Included in this report are collections of documents, statistics, tools and surveys.

The online report includes:

- Interviews with experts on how to create an effective enabling environment for ICT for development and how to finance it;
- Collections of documents, research and statistics on tools

and applications that can benefit developing countries, found on the Development Gateway portal and other websites; and

- A unique section devoted to the "voices" of those developing and using ICT from both the North and South, relating stories contributed through a recent Development Gateway survey of our members.

Interviews with the following people, among others, are to be featured:

- Charles Geiger, Executive Director, WSIS Executive Secretariat
- Pierre Guislain, Manager of Global ICT Division, World Bank Group
- Aimal Marjan, National ICT Advisor, Afghan Ministry of Communication
- Sam Pitroda, Chairman of Indian Knowledge Commission
- Danilo Piaggese, Chief of IT for Development Division, Inter-American Development Bank
- M. S. Swaminathan, Founder, Swaminathan Research Foundation
- Jimmy Wales, Co-Founder, Wikipedia

Partners for this Special Report include: Center for Democracy and Technology, Grameen Technology Center, i4d Magazine, UNDESA, Winrock, World Bank and others.

The Special Report is produced with the support of its sponsor, Intel Corporation. The Report is a quarterly feature of the Development Gateway's global portal of development information, which includes 28

online communities of practice focused on critical development issues.

This Special Report provides a forum for diverse perspectives on the Information Society and what's ahead for ICT as a development tool. The focuses are mainly on e-Government, e-Learning, environment, HIV/AIDS, Food security, Foreign Direct Investment, Gender and Development, ICT for Development, Knowledge economy, microfinance, NGOs, Poverty, Trade and Development, urban development, water resources management, youth and development and on similar areas.

The report was launched on October 24th which will continue through January 2006, and is going to be updated after WSIS in November. For more information on the Report please contact Nadia Afrin at nafirin@dgfoundation.org

Read the Special Report October 24, 2005 - January 15, 2006
<http://topics.developmentgateway.org/special/informationssociety> ■

