

First i4d seminar

The first i4d seminar was held at Kuala Lumpur, in conjunction with Map Asia 2003. The event was attended by eminent individuals from the field of ICT and development, both from Asia as well as other parts of the world.

In his presidential address, Dr. Karl Hamsen, Director, Centre for Space Science and Technology, Education in Asia and the Pacific located in India, said, "I think, in general, technology is not a limiting factor". He was of the view that ICT should be taken as means to the end and ends in itself. Information has to be demand driven. The focus in ICT4D activities should be both at the center and at the periphery. Discussing various economic indicators like GDP, PPP (purchasing power parity) Dr. Hamsen said that lack of development strategy is one reason for existing poverty. If we do not address the poverty issue, it will create many more problems. Commenting on the argument of the book the Great Indian Dream, he said, "I can't comprehend how a corrupt system can generate a clean system". His paper, covering wider issues, set the momentum for the first i4d seminar.

The theme of the first session was 'ICTs-bridging the digital divide?'. Two papers were presented in this session with Mr. Im

Koi Fong, Managing Director of Malaysia International Multimedia Centre for e-Community Development in the chair.

In his paper titled 'Providing Equal Access to ICTs for Rural Communities : The e-Bario Experience', Dr. Alvin Yeo Wee of Universiti Malaysia, Sarawak, discussed the experiences of the eBario Project Team in providing ICT's to a remote rural community. Bario is a remote area in Sarawak province of Malaysia. It is so remote that it is accessible only by waterways or by air. He explained, "...the idea behind working in such area is that can succeed in places like Bario, we can succeed anywhere". e-Bario is essentially a people-centric project with multiple stakeholders. In his final remarks Dr. Wee said, "It's not all about technology, it's about people". In the subsequent paper titled 'Information and Communication Technology: an Indian Perspective', Dr. Anand Sagar from the National Institute of Technology in Warangal, India, described the Indian scenario. He highlighted the emerging trends in technology and discussed about changes in the global information society. He also talked about growth and role of information technology in development of India.

The second session, theme 'ICT for



Dr. Karl Hamsen



Mr. Juan Carlos Barahona



Dr. Satya Prakash



Mr. Chin Saik Yoon



Dr. Philip Kwok-Fai Hui



Dr. Alvin Yeo Wee



Shri. Santosh Choubey



Dr. Anand Sagar



Mr Victor Orlando G. Perez



The speakers at the i4d seminar pose for a group picture

Development- Lessons Learnt' was chaired by Mr. Chin Saik Yoon, Publisher and Managing Director, Southbound Publications, Penang, Malaysia. In this session, four papers were presented. The first paper titled 'The Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Basic Education and Teacher Professional Development: Lessons from International Experiences' by Dr. Philip Kwok-Fai Hui from the Hong Kong Institute of Education described usage of ICTs in education. In his presentation, Dr. Hui said, "...for improving basic education in underdeveloped areas, the use of Information communication technologies (ICTs) in basic education and teacher professional development is the key strategy for improving quality of teaching and learning for developing countries in general, and in Western China in particular". The paper presented by Mr. Vivek Chitale of the National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India, described the pilot study undertaken at the instance of district council of Chhatarpur district in Madhya Pradesh state of India. The project aimed to develop a suitable geomatics-based facility management information system called e-Gran Suvidha. It offers a seamless integration of additional facilities/sectors owing to its open-ended

design. Isang Bagsak - Southeast Asia (IB-SEA), is best described as a marriage between communication and ICT. "Isang Bagsak is a learning and networking program in participatory development communication. The goal of the IB-SEA project is to create a network of natural resource management researchers and practitioners on a global scale who will use as a tool to work more effectively and to build capability within local communities", said the Team Leader of the Information Technology Team of the South East Asia Participatory Development Communication (PDC) Networking and Capacity Building Project, IB-SEA, Mr. Victor G Perez, whose paper immaculately described the project.

Besides sharing experiences of his organisation's activities in the ICT4D sector for the last 18 years in the rural and tribal area of Madhya Pradesh, Mr. Santosh Choubey, Director General of All India Society for Electronics and Computer Technology, said, "...sustenance and entrepreneurship are my key words. Technology can be taken to the people provided that we are sensitive to them". He was of the view that schools should be picked up as community centres to build up broader activities.

His paper titled 'Setting up Multipurpose Information Technology

Centres in Rural and Tribal Areas of India - the AISECT Experience' discusses about local content, interlinking with institutions and promoting of services beyond block level through suchna mitra (information friend).

The seminar also included a paper entitled 'Marketplace of Ideas' which described the experiences of MIT's Media Lab in Costa Rica. Mr. Juan Carlos Barahona, research assistant at MIT Media Lab, Boston, shared his experiences in the rural settings of Costa Rica. He said, "...it is right time now to pay more attention to social networks, have digital weavers...better marketing of ideas."

Dr. Satya Prakash of CSDMS described how students can use ICTs addressing their problems. He discussed the community participation aspect of this work. A lively environment of discussion and debate prevailed all through the event, largely because of the enthusiasm of the delegates and also the respective session chairpersons - especially Mr. Chin. While on one hand, he summarised the session quite aptly, he kept motivating participants to get engaged in discussion. An informal query regarding the future of the initiative led to intense discussion during the valedictory session leading to the announcement of i4d resolution.

Manish Kumar, manish@i4donline.net ■

Resolution of the first i4d Seminar

The first i4d seminar was held on 14 October 2003, at Putra World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in conjunction with Map Asia 2003. During the valedictory session of the seminar the following resolutions were discussed and informally agreed upon.

1. To establish an international forum on ICT for development, founded and supported by i4d and all other participating organizations.
2. Development of a network between civil societies and allied organizations, professionals, non-governmental organizations, corporate entities, researchers, academicians etc.
3. Mutual exchange of ideas and expertise pertaining to ICT in development.
4. The publication of i4d, in part or in whole, in different languages to reach people across regions and countries with prior information to the publishers.
5. Documentation and research on existing ICT projects towards development.
6. To have collaboration on various initiatives through research project, capacity building, etc.
7. The organization of future congregational events, either on site, in print or on the Internet.

i4d invites organisations/ individuals interested in helping the i4d seminar initiative grow.

