PUBLISHED VERSION

Skuse AJ. **Information communication technologies, poverty and empowerment.** Social Development Department, Department for International Development, England. 2001 (Working paper

Published version:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130128103201/http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/sddinfocommtechpovempower.pdf

Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

http://hdl.handle.net/2440/35030

Social Development Department

Dissemination Note No. 3

Information communication technologies, poverty and empowerment

Andrew Skuse

July 2001

Social Development Publications

DFID's Social Development Division publishes various categories of papers, for different audiences. The publications aim to generate knowledge on social development that is pertinent to DFID's goal of eliminating world poverty.

This publication is part of the SDD **Dissemination notes** series**,** providing a quick channel for dissemination of documents of interest to social development practitioners.

Other categories of SD publications are:

- **Guidance** series, providing guidance on key social development issues and/or procedures.

- **Reports,** originally commissioned by the Department or a Social Development Advisor, to address particular policy issues, which has generated findings that will be of interest to others.

- **Working papers,** that aim to provide new thought on issues of policy and practice.

Other documents are also available on issues such as human rights, poverty, gender, social dimensions of business, and stakeholder participation.

Dissemination Note No. 3

Information communication technologies, poverty and empowerment

Andrew Skuse

Social Development Department, DFID

July 2001

Contents

Executive summary

The recent UK White Paper on globalisation has highlighted telecommunications deregulation and new communications technologies such as Internet and e-mail as priorities for countries seeking to become a part of the global 'network' or 'knowledge' economy. Similarly, older technologies, such as community radio, have been profiled for their potential to empower communities. Ongoing debates such as that occurring within the G-8 process on ICTs are developing an approach that is trying to become more demand driven and less technology focused.

Disadvantage and marginalisation, in terms of poor people's ability to access and use ICTs, as well as the provision of 'useful' information by government and NGOs is also firmly on the agenda, though the lure of technological and infrastructural solutions has tended to divert attention away from the ICTs that poor people actually use, such as radio, TV and press, towards those that have a more strategic or intermediary role, such as Internet and e-mail. Understanding the information needs and uses of poor people in context should be identified as the key precursor to future ICT interventions, so as to avoid a heavily donor driven approach. Some key issues discussed in this paper include:

a) Rights to information and freedom of expression should be encouraged at all levels. Deregulation of the communications and media environment can help free and fair information to flow more effectively to civil society. Support to enhancing such flows and targeted interventions that support the most vulnerable and marginalised groups within society should be given priority.

b) The free flow of information can act as a powerful force for empowerment. Combinations of electronic and non-electronic networks can assist NGOs, CSOs and CBOs to more effectively get their voices heard and share knowledge and experience.

c) The convergence of Internet with radio and television offers news opportunities for strategic donor support to key intermediaries that have a recognised role in developing pro-poor media content and who inform civil society via widespread traditional media.

d) Support to developing skills capacity and pro-poor media content within the traditional media sectors of the South should not be eroded by inappropriate support to developing content on new ICTs due to their current exclusivity.

e) The private sector and national governments have a key role to play in service provision and donors should support the development of pro-poor strategies that actively promote social inclusion and social equity.

f) Telecentres, telecommunications and e-commerce have poverty reduction possibilities, though research needs to establish the potential, use patterns and extent to which such services are available to the poor, to women and the marginalised.

g) The new ICTs have low cultural and linguistic diversity and support should be given to increasing the diversity of content for new ICTs so that Internet sites can act as key local language resources for intermediary organisation such as NGOs, CSOs and the media.

h) The most appropriate ICT should be used in any given initiative and assessment should be based on a thorough understanding of access, media use and the content preferences of stakeholders. Internet should not be seen as the panacea to overcoming institutional difficulties in service delivery. While the Internet is a powerful means for conveying macro-level policy to the regional and local levels, the most effective delivery system to the most disadvantaged groups may be via less glamorous alternatives such as radio or newspapers.

1.0 Introduction

Some commentators have suggested that the social and geographic distance between certain sections of the world's population is being rendered meaningless by new information communication technologies (ICTs), though is simultaneously creating an 'information excluded' underclass comprised of the world's poor. Arguments that centre on the dissolution of old development dichotomies such as North and South in favour of the 'fast' and 'slow' resound to the language of empowerment and disempowerment. Increasingly, the 'wired' world is being brought together as the global network economy emerges, though it is at a clear cost to the unconnected (Economic Commission for Africa. 1999).

Increasingly, questions concerning who will benefit and who will be left out of the ICT revolution are coming to the fore in policy debates. Equally, concerns over areas of the developing world being left out of globalisation or being slow to develop ICT infrastructure centre on the potential negative impacts upon economies, economic decision making and the networking, advocacy and empowerment potential that ICTs can bring to civil society groups (CIDA. 1996).

2.0 Globalisation and information communication technologies

From the 1950s onwards, communications infrastructure began a rapid and dynamic phase of expansion, that saw the proliferation of domestic ICTs such as telephones, radios and televisions and the expansion of media content. In the 1960s the somewhat optimistic term, the 'global village', was coined in response to ongoing processes of global interconnectivity and interaction. Today, four of the five most valuable companies in the world are either wholly or partly concerned with global media, communication and information flows (Microsoft, Cisco Systems, AOL-Time-Warner and Vodafone-Mannesman). This tells us much about trends in global economic development and about the dominant directions in which information flows, i.e. North-North and North-South. This new economic reality is forcing multilateral and bilateral providers of development assistance such as the World Bank and United Nations into urgent policy debates concerning the economic growth and poverty reduction potential of ICTs.

Though the global village is now a social, economic and political reality, it has constantly been called into question for the varied inequalities that it exacerbates and generates. Globalisation is a construct that is often left devoid of social content and differentiation, with much attention being paid to global financial institutions, financial agreements and increasingly, the promises of new communication technologies. The economic ability of groups and individuals to purchase or command such things as telecommunications, air travel, faxes, e-mails, Internet and terrestrial media broadcasting, that clearly come to the fore in analyses of experiences of globalisation. The rapid development of communications infrastructure and attendant media industries in the late 20th century is most closely associated with a global process that is described as time-space compression (Harvey, D. 1989). Restrictions in time and space are effectively removed by electronic communications, the geographical boundaries between many nations, cultures, societies and individuals are eroded or removed. Essentially, the world becomes mediated, cultural flows increase and dominant exchanges become symbolic or informational, rather than material, in nature.

Some people are more in control or a part of globalisation than others. In comparison to the urban elites of the developed and developing world, many of whom have access to these services and new technologies, the poor remain on the margins, resigned to spending hours each day walking to collect water or food, or struggling to tune their transistor radios to poor quality transmitters in search of news. The inability of certain people to command the processes and benefits of globalisation, communications and information included, is a key concern. For many poor people, for whom globalisation and the information revolution is still a slow moving process, careful thought must be given as to how best to include them in local, national, regional and international information flows.

3.0   Rights to information and networking for rights

Rights to freedom of expression and access to information are upheld within Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Public access to information can be systematically denied or refused by governments and likewise governments can place restrictions on free speech and freedom of expression via legislation and activities that deny rights of political and cultural association. Openness of government and the free flow of information is enshrined within the principle of 'maximum disclosure' via which governments and public institutions become more accountable to the general public. A civil society that is empowered with open information is better placed to advocate for more equitable and transparent service delivery and has a greater sense of participation and ownership in decision making processes (ARTICLE 19. 1999).

The free and fair flow of information in poor countries is the exception rather than the rule and poverty places further restrictions on access to information. Governments may be poorly placed to systematically disseminate information to the public or may not be inclined towards such transparency because of high levels of corruption. Poor countries are also prone to conflict and such environments are not conducive to free flows of information and rights to access information. In such cases support to the media during times of conflict and deregulation of the communications and media environment are seen as mechanisms for increasing the plurality and diversity of information flows in poor and conflict prone countries (DFID. 2000).

Increasingly, ICTs are being used to create electronic and non-electronic networks for lobbying, information sharing, the sharing of best practice and for strengthening the voice of civil society and the poor. Electronic networks such as the Internet have radically altered the manner in which NGOs, CBOs and CSOs engage with the international community. The constraints of distance are overcome and development practitioners from the South are becoming increasingly vocal in global policy debates.

NGOs, CBOs and CSOs act as key intermediaries between the poor, local and regional authorities, governments and donors, electronic networks are increasingly being used to share

knowledge on best practice. Providing assistance to develop new ICT networks in support of key partner organisations and intermediaries represents both a focused and strategic role that donors are capable of filling. However, mechanisms must be found that allow networks to flourish beyond the wired world and which allow different networks to communicate with each other.

Support to network building should not exclusively focus on Internet based means of communication, because community to community exchanges and the networking of community based interest groups, CBOs and CSOs rely heavily on non-electronic forms of communication and information exchange. Donors and partner intermediaries must think through ways in which the information-poor and ICT-excluded can be included in networks. Commitment to extending the development of telecentres could be a useful starting point. This would enable the voices of the poor to be better captured and play a greater role in policy formation. Networking such as the exchange of information between Pakistani women's organisations on cassette to overcome the cultural constraints of *purdah*, or the simple practice of visiting neighbouring women's organisations as undertaken in the Pacific also need to be systematically linked in to wider network construction.

Box 1: E-mail, networking and human rights in Mexico

The Mexican government is aware of the power of the Internet, not least because the Zapatista movement has used it very effectively over the past five years in their struggle for equal rights. An e-mail-based networking and lobbying alliance of local human rights organisations, the church and activists in the US and Europe was created to pursue human rights issues. In 1994, a human rights worker in the UK received an e-mail from a group of human rights activists stuck in a hotel in Mexico. The hotel had been surrounded by the army, who had cut the phone and were taunting them from the outside, saying things like 'we know where you live, we will come and get your children'. The e-mail (via satellite link) allowed the UK based activist to call Amnesty International's Mexico representative, as well as the press in Mexico City, to let them know that was going on. The situation continued for a few more hours and then the army drove away aware that their actions had been exposed. The next day a formal complaint was lodged with the Mexican government.

4.0   Convergence, public service broadcasting and empowerment

The merging of powerful media, computing and information companies into super-corporations combined with deregulation of the media environment and the digital convergence of new and old technologies such as the Internet with television and radio has costs and benefits. Though convergence has clear economic and organisational benefits for global media business, it also offers radical new opportunities to reach the poor of the developed world via such things are radio webcasting, which uses the Internet as a distribution mechanism for radio features that are downloadable by community radio stations anywhere in the world with access to new ICTs.[1] This empowers small radio stations without the financial resources or skills to engage in investigative journalism to broadcast credible news of a high quality. It is widely recognised that critical and independent reporting, combined with a pluralistic media environment helps to strengthen civil society by exposing such things as corruption and by calling government policies into question.

Box 2: Webcasting in Indonesia

In Indonesia a collaboration between the Centre for Advanced Media in Prague and Indonesia's Institute for the Free Flow of Information in Jakarta has created an electronic network that helps to strengthen independent radio news. The Jakarta based team of journalists produce a range of short news features that is bolstered by local input from independent sources throughout the country. Digitisation and compression technology allows remote users to download and then broadcast news items to their audiences, thus providing a news alternative to the state media.

Source: Eknes, A. & Endresen, L. 1999.

While convergence is opening up new opportunities to empower civil society via the strategic use of new technologies within key intermediary organisations, the advent of global media business is having a negative effect on local and national public service broadcasting. The deregulation of both the media and communications environments is generally viewed as a positive step towards good governance. However, as with any change there are trade-offs. The development of an independent media sector often draws the most talented media professionals away from poorly paid state media employment and in to the private sector. This

---

[1] See The Panos Institute's InterWorld Radio web site at http://www.interworldradio.org

has an impact on local capacity and the ability of state broadcasters to maintain broadcast quality. Whilst convergence is negating some of the key concerns over content, most media and information flows remain heavily biased towards North-North and North-South flows and concerns are being raised over the increasing inability of the South to present their own view of world affairs and of their own social, economic and political diversity.

5.0   Economic constraints to ICT access and poverty reduction

Poor infrastructure constrains information flows. For example, 75% of the world's telephones are concentrated within just eight rich industrialised nations. Though infrastructural advances in areas such as digital telecommunications systems and Internet connectivity *are* occurring rapidly in certain contexts such as Botswana, Mauritius, Rwanda and Gambia, many countries with large rural populations such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Cambodia are yet to significantly modernise their communications infrastructure (Sida. 1999). Some 49% of the world's population live in rural areas and steps should be taken to ensure that the communications and Information divide between rural and urban areas does not widen (Panos. 1998). Within countries that are investing in communications infrastructure such as Rwanda it is unclear whether this will have a significant impact on the rural poor. Within such areas as rural Rwanda, the dominant information decision made by the poor is whether or not to invest in purchasing batteries for their radio sets.

Box 3: Information and poverty in Rwanda

Although radio sets and batteries are widely available for sale in Rwanda, they are difficult to afford for rural people. A small portable FM/SW receiver currently costs about 3,000 FR (about £5.45) and the accompanying batteries to run it cost 200 FR (£0.36). Owning and listening to radio is a luxury when one considers that the daily wage for an adult male labourer on a rural building site is 300 FR per day, or that a female tea-picker can expect to earn only 100 FR (£0.18) per day. Because of this, radio listeners in poor countries such as Rwanda tend to ration their daily listening to key broadcasts such as the national and international news.

Source: Myers, M., Harford, N. & Skuse, A. 2000.

Poverty constructs barriers to accessing essential information, which is compounded by the often poor quality or overtly biased nature of information in many poor countries. Cost based

barriers include low incomes and the relatively high costs of energy, i.e. for batteries, electricity or fuel for generators. These are in addition to barriers generated by poor infrastructure, i.e. low levels of rural electrification and teledensity, low quality radio and television transmitters and poor press circulation.[2] Where poverty excludes people from using even the most basic forms of ICT support should focus on developing alternative and cost-effective energy sources, such as solar power conversions for transistor radios.

New communications infrastructure may be made available to the rural poor in time, and issues of poverty and affordability will arise given that such acute concerns are still applicable to the use of radio. Though radio ownership levels are generally high in the developing world, the risk that new communication technologies such as the Internet and e-mail will exacerbate existing social, economic and political divisions and inequalities is widely voiced. Data from the UK (Figure 1) shows that access to and use of new technologies has settled within patterns that reflect levels of income.

Figure 1: Household Ownership of Selected Communications Facilities, United Kingdom 1997-98

Consumer goods	Proportion (%) of households owning item in each income group					
	Lowest 20%	Second quintile	Third quintile	Fourth quintile	Highest 20%	All
Telephone	79	92	96	98	100	93
Mobile phone	3	6	12	21	38	16
Satellite dish	7	16	20	26	28	19
Home Computer	8	12	22	34	57	27
VCR	65	76	91	94	97	84

Source: Office of National Statistics (1997:154& 1998:135); cited in Golding, P. 2000.

Unlike television in the North and radio in the South, which has a high social penetration regardless of income, new ICTs require continual updating and continual economic

---

[2] Teledensity is a measure that refers to the number of telephone connections per thousand people.

investment. Because of this, the poorest sections of society in both the developed and developing world can be excluded from the information economy. Investment in new technology infrastructure makes little sense unless it can benefit a significant proportion of poor people and be affordable to them.

The poverty reduction potential of new ICTs and the knowledge economy are yet to be firmly established, though it is clear that ICTs are essential to the infrastructure of both small and big business and the efficacy of government, as are ICTs to the broader provision of economic and livelihood information. Increasing access to both ICTs and economically or socially 'useful' information for the poor, such as that relating to commodity prices or basic health could help reduce their poverty. In terms of ICT provision, the private sector and national governments should play the dominant role in providing the necessary communications systems, though donors also have a role to play in encouraging synergistic partnerships that benefit the poor and marginalised. For example, community telecentres are one way of overcoming the exclusion of poor communities from global information flows or telecommunications.

Box 4: The strategic potential of ICT in Mali

In Mali between 1997 and 2000 Internet connectivity rose from just 800 connections to 4,500, mostly within the capital of Bamako. A commitment to linking all of Mali's 701 communes has been made by the government who recognise the potential benefits of distance education and e-commerce that the Internet can offer. Though basic in comparison to developed countries such a network provides an opportunity for key intermediaries such as NGOs, CBOs and CSOs to access information of relevance to their poverty reduction work. Furthermore, substantial levels of radio ownership and deregulation of the media environment within Mali has allowed a number of community radio stations to develop, many of which are actively involved in broadcasting which aims to mitigate some of the key social and economic pressures faced by local people. Encouraging the development of such networks, the linking of new and old technologies and providing support to both pro-poor Internet and media content is a realistic and strategic role that donors can take on in such contexts.

Source: ECOSOC. 2000.

Activities that are placed on a commercial footing such as the well publicised Grameen phone initiative that provides small loans to women to purchase a cellular phone and who then sell telephone services to other villagers and repay the loan from the small profits made on each

call sold. Such low cost solutions are removing barriers to communication, though deregulation of the telecommunications sector is a prerequisite for such activity.

Likewise, e-commerce represents a genuinely global opportunity for small scale producers to market goods and increase their incomes, though care should be taken to ensure that the benefits of such direct marketing activities accrue to producers and not to a new breed of electronic middleman. Ethical and pro-poor e-commerce has to date relied upon not-for-profit intermediaries, though greater access to new technologies, potentially through telecentres, could see an individualisation of this process. However, this is inevitably not without skills and service constraints, such as the ability to design Internet sites, or afford professional assistance and an effective postal system.

6.0 Overcoming socio-cultural barriers to information and communication

Household ownership of any given ICT does not guarantee equal access for all householders, women in particular. Access to and use of ICTs is dependent on a range of context specific and socio-cultural variables such as cultural restrictions on female social mobility or the social construction of childhood. Factors such as gender, age, caste, class, ethnicity and educational attainment need to be identified and analysed if ICT based initiatives are to adequately address the true information needs of the poor and marginalised.

It is widely recognised that the single most effective mechanism for poverty reduction is through providing education to girls. It has been shown that girls with even the most basic education generate more income, have smaller families and are more likely to send their own daughters to school as a result. In contexts where cultural constraints and poverty exclude or constrain girls from obtaining a regular educational experience ICTs can provide an educational lifeline for both students and teachers starved of educational resources and training. A combination of new ICTs and traditional media can provide the widest coverage and ensure that those constrained from education by virtue of poverty, gender, geographical remoteness or conflict are not excluded.

Box 5: Gender and information exclusion in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan communications infrastructure is extremely basic, though radio ownership levels are at saturation level. Despite this, women and children often find it difficult to access and use radio, because radio listening is socially constructed as an ostensibly male activity. Women have low levels of social mobility due to the cultural constraints placed upon them by what is a strongly patriarchal society. Because of this women have fewer opportunities to engage in social communications and few opportunities to engage with media in public places. At home, domestic communications may be poor and men can monopolise the use of the radio for the serious duty of listening to news. Because little investment is made in female education women are widely perceived to be less capable or interested in economic or political issues. However, where women *do* have regular access to radio it is commonly described as a window to the outside world or as a lifeline.

Source: Skuse, A. 1999.

7.0   Issues of pro-poor content, appropriate technology and local knowledge

Currently, the linguistic diversity of the new ICTs such as the Internet is low, though as more users come on line from diverse cultural and linguistic contexts the current dominance of English language as the principal medium of exchange is likely to shift. However, in the interim the dominance of English language on the Internet is likely to remain a critical issue, as are the vast numbers of people that are excluded from engaging with such technologies due to either their illiteracy or the unavailability of new ICTs as a consequence of poverty or lack of ICT infrastructure.

Developing locally generated content for new ICTs that is relevant to the poor is an issue of increasing importance. However, needs based analysis must reveal the most appropriate channels and institutions for support and capacity building. For example, access to accurate and reliable economic information has been shown to have a positive impact on the livelihoods of entrepreneurs and farmers. Where bottlenecks to the free flow of market information, such as prices, are removed transaction costs are reduced and the need to use market intermediaries is reduced. Such data can be made available via a wide range of local, regional and national communication channels from Internet, radio and the press. Social and economic analysis can reveal the most efficient and cost effective means of generating such information flows.

Box 6: Communicating information for small businesses on Cape Flats

The South African Government supports small businesses through encouraging the use of advice services who work with entrepreneurs in townships such as those on Cape Flats surrounding Cape Town. This has created a network of providers charged with supplying skills training and advice on business start-ups, development, employment law, government policy and credit for the previously disadvantaged. Though these service providers are creating Internet resources for their potential client base, research has indicated that small firms feel that advice service providers have poor physical extension mechanisms. Pressure of work and the city based locations of many of the service providers mean that few township based entrepreneurs are able to pay visits to business advisers. Though resources are being committed to Internet sites, research has shown that few township based entrepreneurs have access to such sites due to the low levels of connectivity. Within the township areas one of the most widely available information sources on small business activities is the newspaper *Big News for Small Business* which has a monthly circulation of 25,000 copies.

Source: Fildes, J. 2000.

Commitments to funding the development of pro-poor content for new ICTs should not be made at the expense of more traditional media such as radio, television or the press because these remain the dominant information sources in poor countries. ICT-based interventions should think about the complementarity of different technologies, recognising that whilst radio may be the most appropriate, widely accessible and cost effective means of supplying pro-poor information, Internet sites have a role to play as points of reference for communication professionals working in traditional media. For example, culturally and linguistically relevant Internet sites that address local and national issues surrounding health, hygiene, sanitation, disaster management, conflict, domestic violence, gender equality, agricultural information, human rights, natural resources and so on, can act as key primary information sources for a range of other intermediaries.

Concerns over the potential erosion and loss of local knowledge as a consequence of the development of a 'knowledge economy' dominated by Western knowledge is featuring in critical ICT debates.[3] Networking community to community groups via electronic and non-electronic systems can facilitate the exchange of local knowledge. Given that the general flow

of information via global networks is North-North or North-South, many in the developing world are beginning to question the role that local knowledge has to play and it is important that just considerations are given to supporting local knowledge based ICT initiatives.

8.0 A framework for pro-poor ICT-based initiatives

Poverty reduction is DFID's principle policy objective and this objective is measured against progress towards achieving the International Development Targets (IDTs). The extent to which initiatives in ICTs can assist in helping to achieve these targets and the goal of human and social development based on inclusion and equity within and between stakeholders and societies is being given increasing consideration within international fora and institutions.

High level policy debates within the World Bank, United Nations ECOSOC, G8, Global Knowledge Partnership and ILO are highlighting the potential economic benefits of ICTs, and new technologies such as the Internet and e-mail. An appreciation of the social impacts of such technologies is slowly developing based on recognition of the potential social and economic inequalities that new technologies may exacerbate. The future role of new technologies and their poverty reduction potential should be measured against a thorough understanding of the social impacts that they generate, rather than upon examination of the technologies themselves (Golding, P. 2000). Optimism must therefore be tempered with realism if a suitably effective and pro-poor ICT policy framework is to be developed.

The terminology needs to be inclusive and ICT not be equated with new technologies only. The term ICT must be recognised as comprising a broad spectrum of communication technologies from radio, film, television, press and Internet to participatory forms of development communication such as street theatre and video.

Globalisation is recognised as a phenomenon that increasingly allows the free flow of information, ideas, people, money and technology to occur (Appadurai, A. 1990). Information flows in multiple directions, both vertically, from top-down and bottom-up, and horizontally, between networks and individuals. Ensuring that participatory generated information regarding

---

[3] Indigenous knowledge featured as a Forum within the Global Knowledge II conference (March 2000), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Global Knowledge Partnership which organised the event brings together the public and private sector actors with an interest

poverty flows from the poorest of stakeholders within the development process to the macro-level where their voices can influence national poverty reduction strategies is perhaps the most difficult of communication flows to support. Developing local participatory networks that feed information into larger networks capable of lobbying government and donors should fall within an overall ICT policy framework. Clearly, electronic networks have a role to play, but also mechanisms that capture local perceptions of poverty such as participatory videos that tell the local story of poverty as it affects stakeholders.

The development of the Internet has generated an unprecedented amount of freely available information. Ensuring that the benefits of this information flow to the poorest of development stakeholders requires strategic planning and good socio-economic analysis. Multi-functional telecentres are bringing the benefits of telecommunications, fax, e-mail and the Internet to previously unconnected locations, though the availability of such resources remains generally low within the developing world. By including a broad range of communications technologies from radio to the Internet within ICT policy frameworks we lessen the chances of information becoming 'stuck' at certain socio-economic or educational levels. Many criticisms concerning the elitism of new technologies and the inequalities that their use perpetuates could be overcome if a suitable commitment is made to ensuring that donor support to ICT has the ultimate goal of allowing global information and the benefits of globalisation to flow to the poorest and most marginalised of stakeholders.

Ensuring that the information benefits of globalisation flow to poor people will require the development or adaptation of new methodological tools. For example, participatory poverty assessments (DFID. 1998) and stakeholder analysis (DFID. 1995) could be modified to include access to ICT and information as analytical criteria, and thus help to identify some of the key constraints to ICT use, such as gender, in the process. Importantly, it is increasingly recognised that the globalisation of media business is having a marked effect on the content of public service broadcasting, therefore greater attention must be paid to the information needs of the poor, the content of traditional media and new ICTs and strategic and cost effective means of information dissemination to the poor.

Information does not equal knowledge and care should be taken that support for pro-poor ICT content is culturally and linguistically appropriate so as to enable maximum use of information by poor people. Again, the Internet should not be perceived as a panacea to the difficulties of service delivery and should not draw resources away from the development of essential human and social capacities such as literacy and education. However, ICTs *can* play a valid and increasingly valuable supporting role in the reduction of poverty and the empowerment of poor people.

9.0 References

Appadurai, A. 1990. Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. In Featherstone, M. (ed.), *Global Culture*: *Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

ARTICLE 19. 1999. *The Public's Right to know: Principles on Freedom of Information Legislation.* International Standards Series. ARTICLE 19, London. http://www.article19.org/docimages/512.htm.

CIDA. 1996. *The information technology revolution: what about the developing countries?* International Development Information Centre (IDIC), Canada. http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca

DFID. 1995. *Stakeholder participation and analysis*. Issues Paper, Social Development Department, DFID, UK.

DFID. 1998. *Participatory Poverty Assessments and public services: key messages from the poor*. Issues Paper, Social Development Department, DFID, UK.

DFID, 2000. *Guide to supporting media in conflict and other emergencies*. Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department & Social Development Department, DFID, UK.

Economic Commission for Africa. 1999. *Globalisation and the Information Economy: Challenges and Opportunities for Africa.* African Development Forum. http://www.un.org/Depts/eca/adf/infoeconomy.htm

ECOSOC. 2000. *Development and international co-operation in the twenty first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based economy*. United Nations, New York, USA.

Eknes, A. & Endresen, L. 1999. *Local Media Support*. Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science, Norway.

Fildes, J. 2000. *Business constraints and advice services for SMEs on the Cape Flats*. Draft Ph.D. thesis, Open University, UK.

Golding, P. 2000. *Forthcoming Features: Information and Communications Technologies and the Sociology of the Future*. Sociology, Vol. 34, No.1, pp. 165-184. UK.

Harvey, D. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, UK.

Myers, M., Harford, N. & Skuse, A. 2000. *Evaluation of the BBC Great Lakes Lifeline Service.* Africa Greater Horn Department, DFID, UK.

Panos. 1998. *The Internet and Poverty: Real Help or Real Hype?* Briefing No. 28, Panos, UK.

Sida. 1999. *IT in Swedish Development Co-operation: Suggestions for Ways of Including the Low-income Countries*. Finance and Corporate Development Department, Sida, Sweden. http://www.sida.se.

Skuse, A. 1999. *Negotiated Outcomes: an ethnography of the production and consumption of a BBC World Service Radio Soap Opera for Afghanistan*. University College London Ph.D. thesis.