

## From Capacity to Content for ICT4D

When it comes to application of information and communication technologies for development or ICT4D, some of the major issues that project itself to attention are the 'capacity' to use ICTs for development to produce 'contents' (information and knowledge) to raise the voices of the poor and marginalised in development processes and initiatives.

Panos South Asia (PSA) under its Building Communication Opportunities (BCO) programme jointly supported by SDC and DFID, amongst others, has implemented two projects to address these issues, entitled 'Building ICT Opportunities for Development Communications (BICTDC)' (since 2004) and 'Panos Radio South Asia (PRSA)' (since August 2006).



Building communication opportunities for development communications project since 2004 has successfully and effectively organised several capacity building activities targeting the media and other communication practitioners in South Asia to use ICTs for raising marginalised voices in development. On the other hand, the Panos Radio South Asia project since August 2006 has been successfully able to raise the local voices as local contents in English on development that aims to link the local information and knowledge on development to the national, regional and global level

development processes and initiatives.

More than 100 media and communication practitioners from South Asia have been trained under the capacity building activities which mainly includes training activities on digital technology and radio, TV, online journalism, online broadcasting and other new media technology applications followed by local content development fellowships.



In a project evaluation conducted in February 2007 by an independent consulted for Panos South Asia, Shahjahan Siraj, a communication practitioner who attended the first online journalism training workshop and was given a one year fellowship to produce multimedia local content under the project 'Unnayannews' in Bangladesh said, "Unnayannews has covered issues on marginalised community (http://www.unnayannews.net/archive/marginalized.html) and PRSP". The other story he told the evaluator was of Mohammed Hassan, a young activist and a second generation

refugee who won his rights to secure citizenship of Bangladesh. His story on pursuit of his rights and a better life was concisely and cleverly captured on film by Shahjahan Siraj on Unnayannews. He later edited and packaged it as an online video content for the web site. This online video interview was used by young Hassan as a fund raising tool during communication with the UNESCO office. The powerful advantage of this audio visual tool helped to secure funding from UNESCO to support various activities based on improving health and education for almost 300,000 refugees residing in Bangladesh.



The other project initiative Panos Radio South Asia is an online broadcasting and local content distribution (knowledge sharing) in English through the Internet to national, regional and international broadcasters and other key development actors. It currently produces a fortnightly 15 minute radio magazine entitled 'Panoscope'. Since its launch it has produced more than two dozen 'Panoscopes'. The issues covered have ranged from conflict, public health, environment, democratisation, globalisation to media pluralism.

A non-resident Nepali Tshering Tempa Lama working for WWF China after listening to PRSA said, "I just listened to one of your radio programmes on the two Nepali women. One who had lost her husband and the other who had suffered in the Maoists hands. It was very moving, suddenly made me realise all the issues that our country will have to address in the aftermath. Its great that you are able to give voice to some of those who have suffered so hugely."

The PRSA has not only been successful in raising the 'marginalised voices' but a space for those marginalised issues and voices as a professor of radio studies at La Trobe University in Australia, John Tebbut opined, "I listened to the current programme on the website, disappeared families. It sounds good, very clear quality. Translations work well. An important issue and a balanced program. I looked at the other programs and there are some very worthwhile and important issues that you're dealing with that do not get the same cover elsewhere."



All the more, examples of how the 'contents' generated through the PRSA is being integrated into other international development events have been the adoption of PRSA's Panoscopes on International Migrant's Day by Radio 18-12's global initiative to connect migrant communities worldwide ([www.radio18-12.net](http://www.radio18-12.net)) and World Association of Community Radios or AMARC's International Women's Day 24-hours of programming on 8 March 2007 with the theme focussed on women, peace and security ([www.march8.amarc.org/index.php?l=EN](http://www.march8.amarc.org/index.php?l=EN)).

These two projects of Panos South Asia have not definitely changed the world and proved to be panacea for ensuing poverty. But they are promising contributions to build capacities to produce contents that raise poor and marginalised voices in development processes and initiatives and ICT4D, to bring about possible changes in the way development is pursued.

*(Note: Written by Kishor Pradhan, Panos South Asia, Kathmandu, Nepal. Story submitted for BCO meetings' learning day to be hosted by SDC in Berne on 6 September, 2007. Write-up text contains about 800 words.)*