



Empowerment, Youth and ICT

The Expert Group Meeting

Promoting people's empowerment in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and productive and decent work for all

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Can ICT empower youth?

- Some research argues that there does not exist a direct and causal relationship between ICTs and empowerment.
- The relationship is much more complex and indirect in nature, whereby the issue of its impact on the livelihoods of the poor depends to a large extent on the dynamic and iterative process between people and technology within a specific local, cultural and socio-political context.

But...


- Participation and influence
- Recognition
- Competitiveness
- Connectedness
- And psychological empowerment (Maybe the most immediate and direct effect of ICT whereby newly acquired ICT skills provide poor people with a sense of achievement and pride, thus strengthening their self-esteem)

The Arab Leaders Summit 2011



Youth and ICT in the Arab Spring

- Although many would give credit of mobilizing the massive protests during the uprising to the digital media and even calling it the “Facebook Uprising” (Smith 2011), however, I argue that the social media tools would not have had the same impact in the absence of social movements that were ready to be deployed in an open confrontation strategy with the regime.
- Social media as such is not the main reason behind the uprising. Instead, it was a tool effectively utilized by the existing opposition movements.
- As the recent statistics of social media users in the Arab countries show, a country like Saudi Arabia has more Facebook users, both in terms of numbers and percentage to the population, than Egypt (Arab Social Media Report 2012). Nevertheless, the absence of civil society forces in Saudi Arabia, among other factors, explained why the Arab spring has little influence there.

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- This argument is supported also by the findings of a recent research carried by Kathleen Carley of Carnegie Mellon (2012). The research used intelligent software to analyze 400,000 articles and social media posts about the Arab Spring in 18 countries over a period of 10 months. The research concluded: "**Social media was not a catalyst. The events it describes were the catalyst**". Facebook, Twitter and YouTube certainly played a role in the way the Arab Spring unfolded. However, the main reason was social influence, not social networking.



WPAY

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

- 1. Making information and communications technology available to all youth*
- 2. Providing training to facilitate use of information and communications technology*
- 3. Protecting youth from the harmful aspects of information and communications technology*
- 4. Promoting the use of information and communications technology by persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups*
- 5. Empowering young people as key contributors to building an inclusive information society*

What does the WPAY measure?

Core indicators

- Percentage of youth with daily access to a mobile telephone, urban and rural
- Percentage of youth who used a computer at any location in the last week or month, each sex, urban and rural
- Percentage of youth who used the Internet from any location in the last week or month, each sex (MDG 8.16)

Supplementary

- Provisions for the protection of youth from harmful aspects of ICTs
- Disaggregation of youth Internet use by location of use and by activity



**People centred approach instead
of the digital divide**

The 4 As and the SOS on Youth and ICT

- Availability
 - Example: the necessary infrastructure
- Accessibility
 - Example: ability to afford hardware and software
- Acceptability
 - Example: ICT's have to be locally appropriated by poor communities in order to facilitate their empowerment
 - Language barrier
- Applicability
 - Gender divide
 - ICTs have to build on and strengthen existing social and organizational community structures, so they can lead not only to the individual, but the collective empowerment of poor communities

And....

Services, Opportunities and Support!

The Enabling Environment

- Supportive legal framework:
- Capacity building
- Infrastructures and Mechanisms
 - A “one-computer-per-family initiative” was launched in Tunisia by presidential decision in November 2000. The initiative aimed to enable low-income families to purchase computers at reasonable prices (less than 1,000 Tunisian Dinars, or US\$750) via loans provided by the national solidarity bank.





- **Fund and Support:**


- Promotion of ICT Parks and Incubators to provide job opportunities for the youth


- **Scaling-up and promotion of the better practices:**

- Example: the report of UNDESA has highlighted success stories in 6 areas: Education, Advocacy, Entrepreneurship, Healthcare, Digital Citizenship and Youth Media

Shifts

- From sectoral ICT and Youth policies to inter-sectoral policies
- From debates dominated by ICT specialists, representatives of telecom ministries, ICT companies, technology centred international organisations to more participatory policy formulation
- From traditional Vs. new media debate to combining traditional media with the new form of ICTs.

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- From English dominating content to content that respect the cultural and linguistic diversity
 - From Urban to rural and to the grass root level
 - From programs to mechanisms
 - From virtual to real
 - From organized to institutionalized
 - From education system produce job seekers and good users to job creators and entrepreneurs
 - From a confusing UN messages on youth to a better coordinated youth agenda supported by the UN system



How does A UN-Youth Agency
Sound to you?!