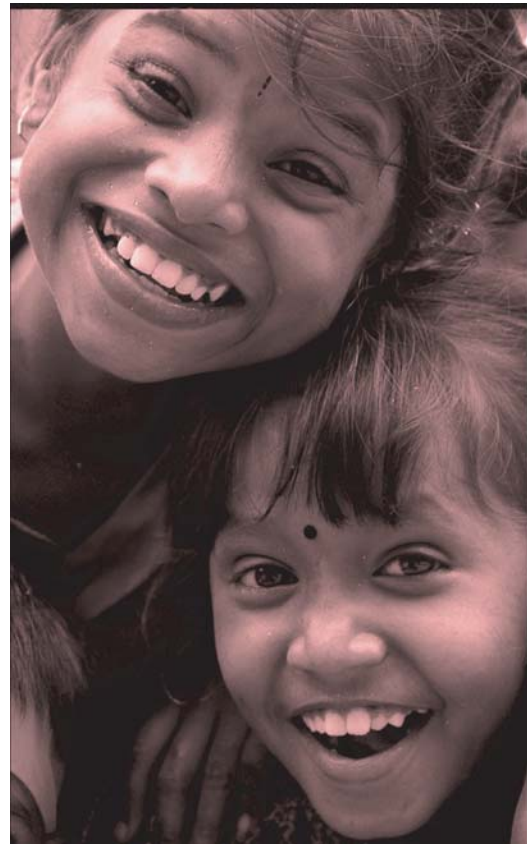


Towards Knowledge Society

A Handbook of Selected Initiatives in South Asia



Development Research Network

In Association with

Bellanet, Nepal

*Centre for Science, Development and
Media Studies, India*

*Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement
of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka*



Towards Knowledge Society: A Handbook of Selected Initiatives in South Asia

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Foreword

The ICT4D issue is now getting priority in development activities around the globe and South Asia is no exception to that. Organisations working in ICT4D have been meeting in different forums to discuss their ideas and share their experiences. Such information sharing process has not only generated enormous enthusiasm, but also triggered collaboration among the organisations on the ground. This handbook is an example of such collaboration.

To support the growing need for information and knowledge regarding ICT4D initiatives, practitioners and organisations in South Asia, a group of GKP Members have collaborated to produce this handbook as a resource for individuals and organisations working in development. The handbook contains ICT4D initiatives of selected South Asian organisations covering key aspects of their activities including impact, innovation, partnerships, management as well as the challenges they face in implementing their ideas. The information gathering approach and preparation of the cases were designed in such a manner so that readers and users can easily understand the ideas behind the models and can make comparisons across models. It is hoped that the understanding will help others learn and fuel the interest to replicate similar models and initiatives. It is also hoped that the information will help organisations connect and collaborate to expand the benefits of ICT to more people, especially the disadvantaged.

I believe this partnership effort of GKP members in South Asia, namely between D.Net of Bangladesh, Bellanet of Nepal, CSDMS of India and Sarvodaya of Sri Lanka will benefit the readers and ICT4D practitioners not only in South Asia, but also around the world.

Rinalia Abdul Rahim

Executive Director

Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP)

Preface

South Asia is one of the most active grounds of ICT4D initiatives. In many instances, South Asia is the pioneer in creative ideas and their successful realisation on the ground. The instances of successes and failures are often discussed in various seminars, workshops and other forums organised in different parts of the world, and some times power point presentations and short write-ups are also available. However, there is a severe dearth of detailed information and insights about the initiatives. Such a situation leads practitioners replication or picking certain elements of initiatives, fail to get adequate information about them; repeat same mistakes in implementing similar kind of initiatives, which were already tested elsewhere; and try to re-invent wheel due to lack of information. The publication of this handbook is a step to meet the deficit and to share selected ICT4D initiatives of South Asia among practitioners, policy makers, development partners, academicians and students.

The process of information collection for case preparation has not been an easy task. A number of project sites have been visited and a good number of people who were involved in the planning and implementation of the project activities are met. Publications, reports and websites of the different organisations and projects have also been used for gathering information. Comments and opinions from the concerned persons and authorities have been considered before finalising the cases.

This handbook is a partnership effort conceived during the Annual Meeting of GKP in Colombo, Sri Lanka in May, 2006. D.Net team is happy to get support from three partners from Nepal, Sri Lanka and India [Bellanet, Sarvodaya, and CSDMS respectively] in compiling the country cases. The enthusiastic response and support of organisations and professionals from other South Asian countries, especially, the contributions of Read Nepal, FIT Nepal and Equal Access of Nepal, SMEDA and Kado of Pakistan, Department of Information Technology of Bhutan, ICTA and YATV of Sri Lanka are gracefully acknowledged.

We acknowledge Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) for its support in conducting research and publishing this handbook. Despite her business in organising Global Knowledge Conference 3, Dr. Rianlia Abdul Rahim contributed foreword to this handbook, we are thankful to her. We also acknowledge support of Kwan Liow and Justine Chew from GKP secretariat.

In the process of finalisation of cases, we particularly grateful to Dr. Toufic Ahamad Choudhury, Director, Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management and Chairperson, D.Net for his valuable guidance and suggestions. The contributions of D.Net colleagues are acknowledged without the support of whom it would not have been possible to publish the handbook.

There are many good initiatives in South Asia, which have not been captured in this handbook due to limitation in budget and space. The partners of the handbook believe that those initiatives will also be captured in future publications.

We hope the handbook will benefit the readers and ICT4D practitioners.

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December, 2007