

ICT4D POLICY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION: A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING POLICY OUTCOMES

PART 2 – POLICY EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Donna Vaughan, Vice President – Partners in Micro-development Inc.

www.microdevpartners.org

Introduction

The goal of national ICT policy in developing countries has until recently focused on access. There is however, a growing movement towards social inclusion as a targeted outcome. This has implications for the way in which ICT policy is measured and evaluated as well as the policy process and actual policy itself.

This series of short articles, explores the link between social inclusion and ICT both in developed and developing countries. The policy in five countries – Sri Lanka, Bolivia, Finland, Korea, and Indigenous Australia will be evaluated against a framework of social inclusion criteria.

In Part 1, the case for social inclusion as an ICT policy goal was examined. In Part 2 I outline a framework for evaluating ICT policy based on a criterion of social inclusion.

Part 2: ICT Policy Evaluation Framework

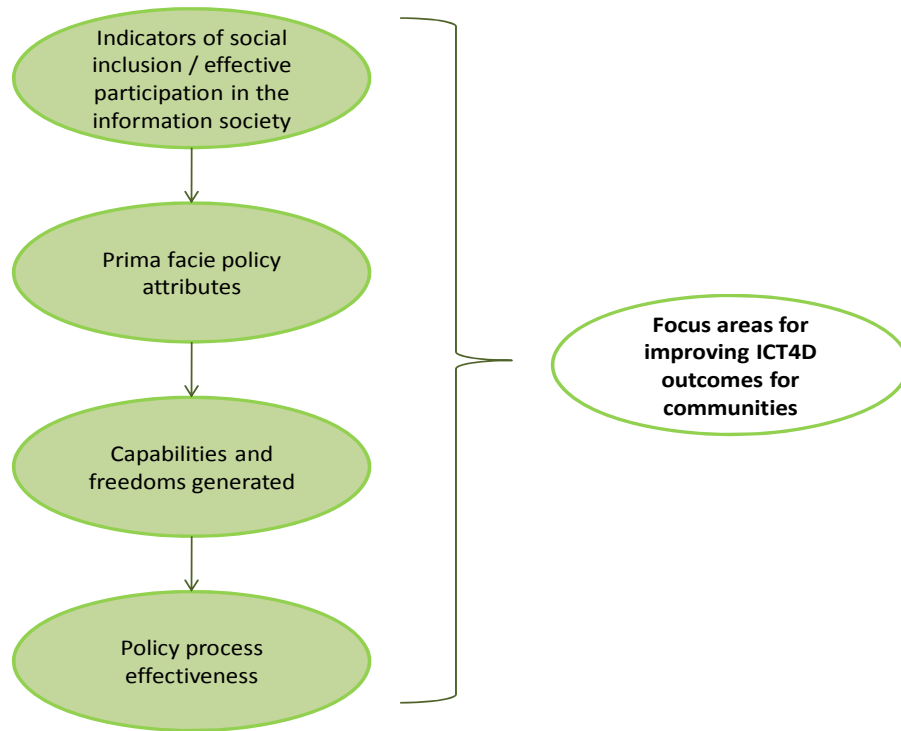
The policy evaluation framework has four components of steps:

1. Using participation in the information society as a proxy for social inclusion as it relates to ICT, a set of indicators are defined for assessing *whether policy is effective* at a community level.

2. At a policy level, *prima facie attributes of a socially inclusive policy* are defined so that a *prima facie* evaluation of national ICT policy based on these attributes can be made.
3. Policy is then examined in depth through the lens of Sen's (1999) capabilities based theory of development in order to determine the *effectiveness of the policy in relation to development outcomes*.
4. Lastly the political context is analysed and policy process theory is applied to understand the factors influencing *the development and evolution of the policy*.

The results of this four stage analysis are then brought together in the conclusion as illustrated below:

Policy Analysis Structure



Measuring Social Inclusion at a Community Level – Key Indicators in the Information Society Era

In order for ICT policy to specifically target outcomes relating to social inclusion, indicators are needed which relate specifically to effective participation in the information society. We are concerned here with the mode of participation rather than types or areas of participation such as economic, political, social.

While access and e-literacy are necessary inputs, they do not automatically convert to development outcomes at the individual, community, or national level. For this

to happen an intervening process is needed. To assume any form of automatic inclusion is to fall into the trap of techno-determinism.

To illustrate this point, consider community telecentres. The establishment of the telecentre provides access. The centre may be used for training both for those in the community who will provide ongoing support and management as well as users. In an ideal scenario, the local community will come together to identify a development need that can be supported by the telecentre and work within their existing structures or organization to adapt the telecentre for this purpose. They will need to link into information society structures in order to participate effectively and may need some guidance in how to do this.

In reality however, the ideal scenario of the community independently adapting and adopting the technology for development purposes seldom happens unless the project starts with identification of a development need that can be supported by ICT rather than simply introducing generic ICT facilities. Further, the support or facilitated entry into wider information society structures is also often lacking where the technology leads rather than the development need or purpose.

From this discussion we can identify five potential indicators of effective participation:

1. Participation occurs or originates within the established social structures of the community.
2. Participation has a purpose related to the community's development.
3. Participation is community led with outside actors limited to facilitation roles.
4. Participation is integrated into broader structures and processes beyond the community boundary which are essential to the development purpose.

5. Participation is unconstrained and as deep and wide as the community chooses.

The next section outlines the key attributes of ICT policy which has social inclusion as a goal and illustrates how these policy attributes impact on effective participation as defined above.

Measuring Social Inclusion at a Policy Level – Prima facie attributes of an ICT policy targeting social inclusion

Under the theory of the right to development, in prioritizing the allocation of resources to particular aspects of development, no right should be diminished or violated notwithstanding the dependency on the availability of resources. States should pursue “an integrated process of development of all human rights” (Sengupta 2005, p.89). This means that “the growth of GDP, technology and institutions must be planned and implemented as part of the right to development” (Sengupta2005, p.89). This implies an overarching development policy framework that is comprehensive in terms of development outcomes and which ensures that instruments of development such as economic growth do not produce inequities: “if there is a trade-off, such that growth will be less than the feasible maximum, that will have to be accepted in order to satisfy the concern for equity” (Sengupta 2005, p.69).

The prima facie attributes of a policy which delivers *effective* participation in the information society for *all* based on the right to development, therefore fall into two categories:

1. Policy framework equity and freedom to participate for all communities.
2. Program scope and funding for sustainability of projects at a community level.

The equity of the policy framework can be evaluated based on the underlying case for investment, specifically, whether the case relies on commercial, market imperatives for success or on enhanced development outcomes which benefit society as a whole. If the former then there will continue to be a divide between those communities who can meet the commercial hurdle rates of the private sector within an acceptable timeframe and with some limited assistance from Government, and those who can't.

Assuming an equitable policy framework which aims to enable every community the freedom to participate, programs must be designed which give effect to this policy. Do the programs make unsustainable assumptions about the contribution of Government, civil society, and the private sector? Do they discriminate in favour of communities who place the lesser burden on limited resources or are the inclusion criteria based on potential development gain (which would benefit poorer communities *prima facie*)? Do they take a long term view of funding and other support beyond initial capital investment and link investment to development returns? Do they seek contributions from those who benefit from the development (this extends beyond the communities themselves) or place the burden on the communities or simply limit access to within Government resource constraints?

Policy Effectiveness and Sen's (1999) Capabilities Based Theory of Development

Sen's (1999) theory of development as freedom can be applied to evaluate ICT4D policy against a criteria of social inclusion by asking the question as to whether or not ICT4D policy helps individuals and communities achieve the requisite capabilities for development, that is, the capabilities to participate in the network and information societies, and engages them effectively in the processes that are necessary for their development, using these capabilities. Implicit in this

test is the criteria of full inclusion not selective inclusion of some part of the population. We are now concerned with actual types of participation rather than mode of participation as per earlier in this Chapter.

Applying the key concepts of Sen's (1999) theory to ICT4D policy to determine the capabilities and freedoms generated involves asking five questions:

1. What degree of alignment is there between the activities ("functionings" – Sen 1999) that the community values in relation to their development and those targeted by the policy? Using Van Dijk's (2005, pp. 163-180) framework, there are seven types of participation which can be considered valuable functionings in the information society: economic, educational, social, spatial, cultural, political and institutional participation.
2. What capabilities have been developed in the communities for participation in the information and network societies or what deprivations have been removed as a result of the policy?
3. What has the community achieved through its participation?
4. Are there any constraints on free agency of communities in their own development?
5. Does the policy provide both the means (e.g. connectivity) and also target active participation in the information and network societies?

The political context of national ICT4D policy is an important factor in evaluating policy against the criteria of social inclusion because it helps to identify the constraints on policy, both policy options and implementation. Four contextual questions can be asked:

1. What interests are impacted in an economic sense by ICT4D policy in a way which is different to ICT policy in a developed country?
2. What conflicts are created or removed by ICT4D policy?
3. What underlying cultural and social values mitigate for or against ICT4D?
4. What impact does institutional strength have on ICT4D policy?

From a process perspective, theories of the policy process suggest five questions:

1. What is the policy paradigm shaping the agenda and goals?
2. What is the balance of interests and beliefs represented in the policy subsystem and how are these reflected in the policy itself?
3. Is the policy incremental or based on rational choice arrived at from a first principles analysis of options?
4. How has implementation been approached organisationally and what are the implications of this?
5. Is there evidence of policy change as a result of evaluation?

Summary

The policy evaluation framework described above can be applied to specific cases of national ICT policy in order to identify aspects of the policy which can be modified to achieve improved community outcomes. The framework tests the community engagement approach, policy equity, outcomes targeted, and constraints in the policy process as key factors driving the level of social inclusion achieved.

Part 3 in this series will test the useability of the framework by applying it to a particular country's national ICT policy.

Bibliography

Sen A. 1999, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001

Sengupta A. 2005, "On the Theory and Practice of the Right to Development", in *Reflections on the Right to Development*, Sengupta A., Negi A., Basu M. eds., Centre for Development and Human Rights, Sage, India

Van Dijk, J. 2005, *The Deepening Divide – Inequality in the Information Society*, Sage Publications Inc. UK