

Research Article

Ict “Tools” for Poverty Eradication and Economic Growth in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses “tools” to include the computer hardware, software, and connectivity that we lump together under the title Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICTs facilitate the creation, storage, management and dissemination of information by electronic means. This definition includes radio, television, telephone, fax, computer and internet. Newspaper and other print media do not fall under that definition but are strongly influence by electronic means (online news). In recent time, the understanding of poverty has undergone significant changes. It's no longer viewed as being restricted to material deprivation, but encompasses intangible aspects, such as lack of access to schooling or health care, vulnerability towards external events, or being excluded from decision making processes. This approaches to poverty is also reflected in the MDGs, which addresses the multiple and interrelated dimension of poverty and development. Poverty eradication in this study is looked at eradication of poverty in terms of facilitating empowerment, promoting opportunity and enhancing security. The paper then proposed how ICTs can be used to eradicate poverty and promote economic growth towards empowerment, opportunity and security.

Keywords: Empowerment, ICTs, Opportunity, Security.

1. Introduction

Poverty is the opposite of wellbeing. Beyond lack of income, multidimensional concept of poverty also refers to disadvantages in access to land, credit and services (e.g. health, and services), vulnerability (towards violence, external economic shock, and natural disaster), powerlessness and social exclusion.

The World Bank report for 2000/2001 uses the standard of one US dollar per day to draw the line of extreme /absolute poverty. Considering that we have about 1.3 billion people around the world in poverty circle. Using Nigeria as a case study and considering the inflation rates between year 2000 & 2011. One can then put the assertion in the report at average of 5 dollars per day. If that should be the case then we may have above 80% of Nigerian living below poverty line and this could have negative effect on the economic growth of the nation.

Modern approaches to poverty go beyond World Bank report of 2000/2001 because reliance on income terms alone misses many facet of the everyday life of the poor and therefore unsatisfactory. Therefore poverty is not only restricted to material deprivation, but encompasses intangible aspects, such as lack access to schooling, health care, vulnerability towards external events or being excluded from decision making processes.

Based on the discussion, there are 3 concepts that determine level of poverty and for poverty to be eradicated in any society these three concepts must be facilitated in the society; ¹**empowerment**, ²**opportunity** and ³**enhancing security**. If people are empowered, there will be opportunity in the land and security will be enhanced then poverty will be eradicated or reduce to miniature therefore leads to economic growth.

The diagram that follows illustrate the requirements to archive the concept listed i.e to make ICTs effective anti-poverty tool.



Figure 1: Illustrate the requirements to make ICTs effective anti-poverty tool.

This study investigate into how ICTs can be use to facilitates empowerment, promote opportunity and enhancing security.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

2.1. Gender Equality

The gender equality concern is base on the fact that majority of the poor people in Nigeria are women. Villages were selected in selected states across Nigeria where the researcher carry out his studies and it was discovered that larger percentages of the people in the selected villages are poor and women are more than men.

Table 2.1 Data on selected villages across Nigeria

States	Village	Population	Women	Men	Poverty Level in %
Osun	Wasimni	3,000	1860	1,140	50
Oyo	Osegere	1715	1063	652	59
Jos	Jibu	917	568	348	98
Ebonyi	Afikpo	2813	1744	1,069	76
Imo	Awomma	1718	1065	653	76
Anambra	Orafuite	1314	999	119	67

2.2. Sustainability

There is need for sustainable project or institution to be able to deliver benefit in long term. Sustainable development must take into consideration; social, economic and environmental dimension of development. In this case sustainability is multidimensional and different stakeholders have different vision which may leads to poverty reduction. In this case I perceived that some Nigerians are poor because of lack of sustainability and political affiliation.

2.3. Poverty eradication strategies in Nigeria

The major question here is how to mainstream ICTs in national poverty eradication. For country like Nigeria, our leader know quite alright that larger percentage of population were poor. The development of national poverty reduction (not eradication) started with Obasanjo regime 1999-2007. The schemes **PRS** poverty reduction scheme was introduced and some money was allocated to the scheme. The approach relates poverty concept to reliance on income as money was given to beneficiaries of the schemes to start a business or improve on their current business/market. Still yet Nigerians are still poor.

2.4. Enabling ICTs policy environment

This include respect for freedom of expression, diversity and free flow of information, competition in ICTs infrastructures provision, including local content, and use of cost effective and locally adaptable software including the promotion of free/open source solution and open content where feasible. How far as Nigeria achieved this?

2.5. Illiteracy and poverty

It was discovered that some of the poor people in Nigeria are illiterates in table 2.1, 100% of the people in the sample villages does not meet the minimum requirement of MDGs indicator for education as none of people above 30yrs finished primary school and 75% of the age range 5-15 years are not in school. Some of the data to support this assertion is shown at the end of section 3 of this study.

3. Pro-poor ICTs policy environment

3.1. What pro-ICTs regulations are required for up-scaling ICT towards poverty eradication in Nigeria?

The national regulatory environments for ICTs are based on natural visions of challenge, approaches and priorities that are absolutely crucial for success. However ICT regulation is not part of the problem. Any government committed to poverty eradication as top priority must explicitly mainstream it in regulations and policies relating to ICTs. There are number of options for moving into the direction of pro-poor policies; ¹freedom of expression, ²building up an independent regulator, ³competition in ICT infrastructure, ⁴application of cost effective an locally adaptable tool such as open/free source software, ⁵pro-poor license obligation for services providers and operators, ⁶making rural telephoning profitable by supportive policies, ⁷ensuring an effective service provision, ⁸creating space for local initiatives and policies, ⁹enabling community radio.

The importance of an enabling ICTs environment is internationally recognized. For instance international institute for communication and development, on the basis of their extensive field experience, strongly argues in favor of embedding ICT related activities in an enabling environment in order to influence the sector.

3.2. Data to improve on pro-poor ICT in Nigeria environ for poverty eradication in Nigeria

In other to enable pro-poor ICT in Nigeria environ, there is need for significant improvement on the data in table 1 & 2 below year by year.

1. Data on Enabling Environment

GOVERNANCE	
POLITY INDEX	Democratic
PRESS FREEDOM	Partially free
POVERTY ERADICATION	
YEAR IN PLACE	Since year2000
INCLUSION OF ICT	No
INDEPENDENT REGULATOR for ICTs	Yes
AFFORDABILITY	29%
ICT LEVEL OF COMPETITION	70%
OPEN SOURCE	Data not available

2. Data on Millennium Development Goal

MDGs 1	
Poverty	70.25 Nigerian is below poverty line of 1\$ per day
MDGs 2	
Education	22%
literacy	17%
MDGs 3	
Gender equality	1 out of 100
ICT Indicators	
Radio/television	3 out of 200
Telephone	19.2% of entire population sampled
Personal computer	2% of entire population sampled

3.3. Comment & Source of Data

Data in The table 1 was sourced from government policy and available record from newspaper, magazine, electronic media & processing of data obtained from sample population. It presents data as in polity index (democratic or autocratic). Some of problems of Nigeria have been attributed to military regime; there is no doubt that since Nigeria return to democracy poverty level has reduced to some extent. Press freedom its significantly improved compared to late 90s just of recent the national assembly pass a bill on freedom of information which is synonymous to freedom of press. Poverty eradication, in the year 2000, Obasanjo regime introduce poverty reduction scheme to alleviate problem of poverty in Nigeria.

Data in The table 2 was solely sourced by processing of data obtained from sampled population. It present data on millennium development goals MDGs—1, 2 & 3. MDG1 give the proportion of population living below a dollar per day, MDG2 give data on education as in net enrolment ration in primary education & literacy rate as in age between 15-24, both sexes having completed a primary courses. MDG3 give data gender equality as in population of seat own by community development organization or town hall meeting, ICT indicator as in how many people have access to radio, telephone and personal computer.

4. ICTs for Poverty Eradication

The basic concept that needs to be improved on in other to eradicate poverty in Nigeria are: empowerment of citizenry, opportunity and enhancement of security. This section then discussed how ICT could be used to achieve that as follows;

4.1. Empowerment (ICT and political participation of poor)

The question here is how to give poor people a stronger voices and recognition at all level of decision making in Nigeria by using ICTs.

- E-governances: This harnesses ICTs for the government work processes, information sharing and services delivery. Partial benefit are making the government machinery more efficient and effective, improving service delivery and revenue collection, and empowering citizens by increasing transparency and accountability. For instance the use of ICTs in lands record management could give government focus to planning based on population needs. And elementary condition is that government communicates in national languages and these languages can be use on internet. Investigation reveals that larger percentages of Nigeria population leaves in rural areas and can only communicate in their local languages. ICTs can facilitates communication with this people in their mother tongues. GSM providers like MTN allow their subscribers to choose among English language, and 3 major Nigeria languages i.e. Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. Government can also forward information to this people through their chosen language. This will empower them and make them feel to belong to Nigerian decision making.

- Deconcentration and decentralization of the public sector can be greatly facilitated by use of ICTs. Effective decentralization contributes to people's participation in the political processes of their country. It can also contribute

to material well being of the people. Effective of ICTs based deconcentration and district level planning is mainly determined by the political will to truly decentralized and power sharing. This will facilitates empowerment, poverty eradication and economic growth.

- Government interaction with the citizen: ICTs can contribute to the empowerment of individual citizen as well as the community level. People who are well informed about their entitlements and rights are different clients in service delivery. Citizen who cooperate in an organized way at the village level or nationally; trade union, market women association etc. gain leverage in public and political processes.

In summary individual government, groups as in civil society, trade unions or organized labour must imbibe the use of ICT to empower their people, so that they can participate effectively in their society. To achieved this there must be e-governances, decentralization of public sector through ICTs, and using ICTs to communicate with citizen regularly.

4.2. Opportunity: ICTs and Income generation for poor

The major concern here is how to enhance income generation by the poor through ICTs.

- ICT has a major sector of economy under favorable conditions provide access to relevant information and knowledge, reduce costs of production and transaction and enhance communication. For employment and income generation towards poverty eradication. ICT can promote livelihood, such as increasing productivity, improving market access, and creation of employment opportunities and higher chances of finding jobs. We have some graduates roaming about the streets with their certificate without jobs. Some of these graduates if the have ICT/IT experiences such as ability to use computer and some application programs on it solve problem related to their filed this will enhances their chances of getting job and be out of poverty. This is because operations in many organizations public sector and multinationals in Nigeria are now comprised.

- The benefit of ICTs in context of production and empowerment is not limited to formal sector and multinationals companies alone. It can also be extended to benefit poor people. This people can venture into small businesses such, phone call center, phone accessories sales etc. and government must provide enabling environment for these poor people strive.

4.3. Security: (ICTs and education of the poor)

One of the reasons why some people are poor is because they are not educated. This section is concern about how to use ICTs to up-scaling both formal and informal education in Nigeria. With education for education by education everything is possible (Yekini 2011). If you are educated, you will know that poverty is not good, you will know your rights in all ramifications and you will be secured in any form of insecurities.

EFA (education for all) an international body committed to bringing the benefits of education to every citizen in every society. Partner comprises a broad coalition of national government, civil society groups, and development agencies such as UNESCO and World Bank. EFA was launched in Thailand 1990, after a decade of slow progress, it commitment was reaffirmed in Daka Senegal in April 2000, then again in September 2000 when 189 countries including Nigeria partners and adopted the MDGs to ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys or girls will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The achievements' are measured by 3 indicators; ¹net primary enrolment, ²percentage of cohorts reaching grade 5, and ³literacy of the young (ages 15-24). The universal primary education in this MDGs cover only some areas where ICTs may be use to enhance education of the poor.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

There is no doubt that larger percentages of Nigerian are suffering from poverty and lives below poverty line of a dollar per day of World Bank report of 2000/2001. This has contributed negatively to economic growth of this nation as poverty has contributed to some negative behaviors and joining of groups like BokoHaram, Kidnapers, pipeline vandals etc.

Poverty eradication must be taking seriously by government at all levels. The approaches to poverty eradication in our country Nigeria must be focused to facilitating empowerment as in political participation of poor, opportunity as in use of ICT to generate income directly or indirectly, and enhancing security as in using ICT to educate poor. For this to be archived & for Nigeria to meet demands for MDGs in 2015. Government must provide enabling environment for ICTs to strive in this country Nigeria. (Steady power generation, flexible ICTs policies and subsidizing ICTs tools and services for poor).

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