



Asia Media Summit 2006

Pre-Summit Workshop on ICTs for prosperity: Potential and challenges for broadcasters

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**Brief Report presented to AMS 2006 Plenary
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The workshop on ICTs and Prosperity: Potential and Challenges for Broadcasters was held on 28 May 2006 and was co-organised by Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and TVE Asia Pacific (TVEAP) in partnership with AIBD.

It brought together a total of 35 TV and radio broadcasters, civil society activists and media regulators

from Asia and Africa regions for a full day of reflection and debate on the nexus between information and communications technologies -- ICTs -- and broadcasting. The workshop saw had a mix of keynote presentations, a panel, lots of discussions and three film screenings.

The workshop, taking place six months after the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), looked at the role of broadcasters in bridging the digital divide and other socio-economic disparities. It also discussed some practical aspects of how broadcasters can cover ICT stories that can, in the long term, help create a better, healthier and safer world.

The challenge we set for ourselves was three-fold:

- To understand the transformative impact ICTs are having on how we do our work;
- To find our way in the complex technical & political discussions surrounding ICTs & development; and
- To look for new ways to cover ICT and their impact on ordinary people's lives, livelihoods & needs.

As professional story-tellers using the public media, we asked ourselves:

- How can we better cover the multiple roles of ICTs impacting society?
- Where do we find real stories? What are they really worth?
- What should we guard against - hype, myths, misconceptions?

We recognised that radio and television are ICTs themselves - with greater public outreach and social influence than the newer ICTs such as mobile phones, personal computers, Internet, communications satellites and other data management devices.

One of our keynote presentations discussed how the newer ICTs are completely transforming radio and TV broadcasting through media convergence and the creation of more interactive opportunities for audiences.

The other keynote presentation surveyed the current ICT landscape, and looked at technology, policy and societal aspects of ICTs. It suggested a number of ways in which radio and TV broadcasters could use the newer ICTs to promote the public interest - for example, by advocating more open societies, more transparent and accountable governments, and better informed citizens.

The presence of passionate and articulate media professionals, managers, activists and researchers ensured that our discussions were lively and wide ranging - but they were always rooted in the real world issues and challenges. A few 'soundbytes' from our discussions help illustrate this:

- "ICTs are not just for techies. They are for everyone. All our future interests are being determined so we must all get involved."
- "In spite of all our ICTs and multi-channels of radio/TV, the Asian Tsunami arrived without any advance warning. Clearly, we need to be more efficient and smart in our use of ICTs."

- “A billion people now online...and 5 billion+ still ‘offline’. We shouldn’t get mesmerised by gadgets. They are merely tools to solve real world problems.”
- “We need to treat the electro-magnetic spectrum like we treat other common property resources like our air. It needs to be managed rationally. Governments should not be allowed to mismanage and abuse it.”
- “The digital renaissance should be accompanied by a management renaissance. If not, we will not benefit.”
- “Can technology really help us to understand each other better? I am not sure. Ten years of modern ICTs in China have not done that. It is the media that can help.”

A broad range of issues came up during our discussions. To capture just a few:

WSIS follow-up - areas that need attention and action:

- Policy/Legal/Regulatory issues
- Content development, adaptation and customisation
- ICT Infrastructure development
- Intellectual property and Licensing concerns: there is an urgent need to reduce the cost of accessing broadcast content, especially by those in low income countries.
- Community radio/TV licenses should be granted free of charge (Free Spectrum)

Rise of Citizen Journalists:

- With a new blog being created every second, everyone can be a reporter or publisher - the entry barriers to the media have been lowered.
- What does this mean to traditional media gate-keeping?
- Can we not exploit the inevitable: find creative ways to enlist citizen journalists to generate our content?

The workshop specifically discussed how TV and radio broadcasters could strategically use new ICTs to promote the public interest and socio-economic development. It emphasised the need for greater capacity building among journalists, and more partnerships with civil society and advocacy groups.

GKP, TVEAP and ITU each explained their current and planned activities for capacity building and engaging the media professionals who take an interest in covering ICT and ICT for development issues.

The following are the main recommendations arising from the workshop:

Story telling:

- Strengthen media's links with civil society, academia, activists
- Form partnerships that don't affect our editorial independence
- Try out new formats to reach out and engage fragmented, distracted audiences

Capacity building:

- Training module on Media, ICTs, and Social Justice issues
- More media fellowships on ICTs in development
- Media orientation & training workshops for mid-career professionals

Advocacy:

- Better management of spectrum as a public commons
- Enabling framework for community-based broadcasting
- Move towards more accommodating intellectual property arrangements, e.g. the Creative Commons approach

We hope that AIBD and other organisations committed to media development would take up some of these recommendations.

Let me conclude by quoting my own words with which we ended our workshop: "Content is still king, but communication is queen. We need both of them. Long live the king and queen!"