

Preface

Today, we live in a world characterized by dramatic cultural, economic, social and educational differences. More than 800 million adults still lack basic literacy skills; at the other end of the spectrum, the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is skyrocketing. The need of the hour is to bridge gaps and bring people on one common platform.

In September 2000, building upon a decade of major United Nations conferences and summits, world leaders came together at United Nations Headquarters in New York to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets—with a deadline of 2015—that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A massive development is needed to push forward the developing world and spark greater interaction and discussion between countries and bridge the divide that currently exists on the continent. ICT can greatly speed up the ability of response and reforms in the world. In fact, ICT could very well be the great unifier that brings governments and people together.

The modern mechanisms of communications including electronic media and the Internet can transform relations with citizens, businesses, visitors and the governments. The installing of Wi-Fi in Haiti following the earthquake helped speed up response from months to days. Various studies have shown that access to mobile phones has allowed for wider awareness of violence against children in several countries.

But if there is one thing that we have learned over the past years, it is that technology alone does not make the difference, but rather the people who own it and apply it do. The broad-range ICTs that are available, whether it is email, the Internet, a mobile telephone, or community radio, enable people to access information and to communicate, allowing them to make more informed decisions and connect with

others. But it is what people do with the opportunities created by ICTs that lead to greater social economic and environmentally sound development.

The book attempts to create awareness about the UN-MDGs and how various ICTs can be harnessed to appeal to different demographics. Current empirical evidence suggests that MDG awareness is relatively low particularly in developed countries, and that the levels of MDG awareness vary considerable across socio-economic variables or demographics from United Nations perspective.

We also examine how ICT can be used to bring about technical and social innovations that strengthen livelihoods, support economic development, water and climate resilience and improve the education and health sectors and enhance development opportunities.

Several studies are highlighted that reinforce the view that government support and private sector expertise and funding are important factors in ICT-based e-government solutions in developing countries.

The book also builds on the thesis that a strong connection between competencies in mathematics, science, and information communication/technology is required to build logical concepts and critical thinking skills. It also examines the opportunities and barriers of promoting students' learning skills, including communication, cooperation, collaboration and connection using the Wiki tool under the blackboard platform.

ICT use is often beyond the reach of many school communities in developing countries. While supporting these developing countries through donations of technology is a start, there is an equal if not a greater need to build teacher capacity so that the resources are effective in classrooms. The book also throws light on the Share, Engage and Educate (SEE) and how it is creating educational opportunities for learners in developing countries using ICT.

Finally, we have also attempted to highlight the challenges involved in application of ICT in education. This is significant for educators in order to surmount these obstacles and consequently successfully incorporate ICT into the educational system.

The chapters present the relevant literature on ICTs and the perceived barriers to ICT integration in basic education. They also focus on the implications of incorporating ICT in the basic educational system. The challenges confronting the integration of ICT in education are equally identified with a view to ensuring a more efficient application of ICT in attaining education for all.

The book is designed for the use of UN officials, students, teachers and lecturers in universities. It provides a brief overview of some of the key topics in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education. As you read this book, you will come to understand that ICT is required to meet MDGs. To date, relatively little of this potential has been achieved. Though the MDGs are laudable ambitions, a number of questions remain as to how technology can be used as an enabler, and whether it can serve broader socio-economic development goals. This

book reviews and comments on the challenges and opportunities facing developing countries as they embrace the ICT revolution.

We also take the opportunity to thank all the people who helped to make the book a reality. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to the Advisory Editorial Board.

We hope you enjoy the book.

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A United Nations Perspective

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