

eINDIA2007 Conference Report

Introduction

eINDIA2007 event, a four-day Indian Information and Communications Technology (ICT) conference and exhibition, was held from 31st July-3rd August 2007 at Hotel Taj Palace, New Delhi. The mega event provided a unique platform for multistakeholder partnership from across the world to share a level playing ground through active conferencing and serious business networking. The country's biggest ICT event was **organised by the Centre for Science Development and Media Studies (CSDMS) and co-organised by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology**, Government of India and UNDP. It received overwhelming **support from four key ministries** namely the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**, the **Ministry of Agriculture**, the **Ministry of Human Resource Development** and the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**.

eINDIA2007 conference rightly focused on the use ICT in health, governance, education, agriculture and ICT services, since innovations in these sectors have huge impact on millions of citizens, who cannot be reached today by the government services and therefore, are not receiving basic human development services.

eINDIA2007 conference and exhibition saw **320 speakers** across 7 thematic tracks, and the ICT4D film festival. With delegates from more than **35 countries**, comprising Asia, Africa, Middle East, Europe, Latin America, North America, etc., **eINDIA2007** closed with around **1500 participants** attending the seven inter-related conferences. The participants across various verticals represented government, industry, international agencies, research and academic institutions, etc.

Along with the **seven seminal tracks- eAgriculture India2007, egov India2007, Digital Learning India2007, Telecentre Forum India2007, eHealth India2007, mServe India2007, Community Radio2007**, there was the **first ever film festival** showcasing grassroots initiatives and innovations in ICT usage for those who need it the most. The **'i4d Awards'** awarded key ICT4D initiatives in National, Overseas and Special Jury categories, while the **'Power School Award'** was given to a school that had excelled in the use of ICT in education.

Inauguration

The event was **inaugurated by Thiru A. Raja, Hon'ble Minister for Communications and Information Technology**, Government of India. While inaugurating the conference by lighting the ceremonial lamp, Thiru A. Raja, said, "The potential of IT to stimulate the development of different sectors of the domestic economy in India is enormous. It can dramatically reduce the cost of communications, improve access to technology and marketing capabilities for the rural poor, eliminate intermediary exploitation in the

production and distribution chains, increase government accountability, and stimulate democratic participation”.

The Honorable Minister for Communications and Information Technology, Government of India **launched the e-Agriculture (www.e-Agriculture.in) portal**, which is the first e-Agriculture portal not only in India but also in the Asia region.

Other luminaries who graced the inaugural session included **Dato Halim Man, Secretary General Ministry of Energy, Water and Communications, Malaysia, Jainder Singh**, Secretary, Department of IT, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India, **Champak Chatterjee**, Secretary, Department of Secondary Education and Literacy, Ministry of HRD, Government of India, **Isabel Guerrero**, Country Director – India, World Bank, **Michael Clarke**, Head ICT4D, IDRC, Canada, among others, who through their address set the pace of the conference. Dr. MP Narayanan, President, CSDMS, gave the welcome address.

Exhibition

The grand inauguration of eINDIA2007 was followed by the inauguration of the eINDIA2007 exhibition. Through the exhibition, the conference provided an opportunity for updating the participants on new advancements, solutions and services in the field of governance, health, agriculture, education and development.

Proceedings

The conference comprised three days of key note and panel discussion sessions. However, along with panel discussions, there were also presentations by the speakers. The key highlights and major recommendations of each track is summed up below:

eAgriculture India 2007

eAgriculture India 2007 was a new track introduced in eINDIA2007 to look at the **potential of ICTs in serving the various needs and demands of the rural farming community in India** and abroad. The conference saw the participation from Abhijit Sen, Member, Planning Commission, A K Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. R. Balakrishnan, Executive Director, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), and other such stalwarts from the agriculture sector. They highlighted some of the constraints in the use of ICT for agriculture. These include the **problem of unskilled rural youths**, the **extension machinery in India not being able to absorb the rapid changes** happening in technology. It was stressed that under all these constraints, **ICT appears as a potent tool**. In a vast country like India with 127 different agroclimatic zones, and the need for personalised services becoming stronger, **it is only the technology, which can bring success in the rural development initiatives**. Another major recommendation was that **computer education should be a part of the course curriculum of the agriculture education system**. At the same time, supply chains need to be established, **mapping of**

the farmers should be done, and a **24X7 hours TV channel dedicated exclusively for agriculture** should be started, the eminent speakers recommended.

egov India 2007

egov India 2007 conference **saw the participation of eminent figures in the e-Governance field**, which included Wajahat Habibullah, Chief Information Commissioner, Government of India, R. Chandrasekhar, Additional Secretary, Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications and IT, Government of India, IT Secretaries from nine states, B.K. Sinha, Additional Secretary, Ministry of *Panchayati Raj*, Y S Malik, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, Satish Kaushal, Country Manager - Government and Education (GSMB), IBM India and other key experts and practitioners from government and private sector. These leaders in e-Government emphasised that **e-Governance can be an important medium for addressing equity and discrimination issues**, making all sections of society to access services. The eminent speakers recommended that the e-Governance projects should **address transparency and accountability issue**. They also unanimously said that the **integration, technological compatibility, and comprehensive/integrated planning for e-Governance are some of the missing linkages** at the state level, which must be addressed. The **Role of public-private partnership** was also stressed. It was emphasised that there should be a **change in mind-set within the bureaucracy**, which should work as a corporate entity. They also recommended that in the assessment of e-Governance projects, **the feedback from the common people** should be taken.

Digital Learning India 2007

Digital Learning India 2007 **highlighted the barriers of ICT integration in different sectors of education in India** and for other countries as well. The conference was attended by eminent personalities such as Subhash C Khuntia, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India, G Narendra Kumar, Secretary, Department of Training, Technical and Higher Education, Government of India, Dr. Subramanian, Deputy Director General, National Informatics Centre, Shameema Parveen, Knowledge Officer, Edutech, India, among others. The conference highlighted **appropriate education and training as the key components of building a knowledge-based society**. The opportunities and tools provided by ICTs are revolutionising the paradigm of addressing the developmental issues. **IT and telecommunications in tandem, have become powerful instruments for dissemination of knowledge and skills and for providing services to citizens**. Some of the major recommendations made by the eminent panelists are: there is a **need for repeated demonstration of ICT programmes, projects or any of the ICT attempts**, even if in small scale, **to generate adequate awareness, teachers' training should be more directed towards teachers' skill improvement with ICTs**, since teachers are not equipped in ICT training. **A portal for teachers was recommended** in this direction, providing the models, framework for teacher development. **A call for a learner-centric pedagogy using ICT based tools** was also made.

eHealth India 2007

eHealth India 2007 **witnessed an arduous effort to explore opportunities of technology leveraged public health systems** and find ways of efficiency gains and value additions for multiple stakeholders in the healthcare ecosystem. The conference was graced by stalwarts such as Aradhana Johri, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, Ranjan Dwivedi, National Professional Officer (eHealth), World Health Organisation, Dr. Tarun Seem, Acting Director, National Rural Health Mission, among others. The presence of eminent experts from countries like Canada, Singapore and Norway and their process of engagement through presentations and discussions on policy interventions, research agenda and technology solutions helped in analysing situations in India with reference to developed nations. A major recommendation of the conference was that **suitable technology solutions, higher adoption of local language computing must be used for the improvement of the prevalent pathetic health conditions in India**. The speakers underlined the need to **analyse local conditions** and suitability factors while selecting technology applications for rural healthcare. The eminent panelists also highlighted the **need for more nursing colleges and paramedical training facilities in the country**.

Telecentre Forum India 2007

Telecentre Forum India 2007 **aimed to raise awareness about the growing telecentre movement in general, and India in particular** and take up the recommendations of the deliberations of the conference to the policy-makers for appropriate policy changes. **Attended by IT secretaries of states that pioneered in establishing common service centres** like S N Tripathi, Secretary, Department of IT, Government of Orissa, V S Kundu, Special Secretary IT, Government of Haryana, Navin Kumar, Principal Secretary, Government of Bihar and R S Sharma, Secretary, Department of IT, Government of Jharkhand, and other experts and practitioners from government and industry. The eminent speakers **highlighted the role of telecentres as: increased literacy rate; ICT driven education and ICT for village development**. They recommended that to have greater future success, **policymakers and public IT managers should pay close attention to long-term business planning, strategic management, and stakeholder partnership in future kiosk development** and similar e-Government projects. **Adequate awareness building, promotion and sensitisation of all stakeholders** – from implementors of programmes to village level entrepreneurs and the community – was pointed out as the most crucial component to the success of the telecentres. At the same time, **capacity building on priority basis** was recommended if telecentre have to be sustainable.

mServe India 2007

mServe India 2007 track **encapsulated the idea of using mobile technologies for development** and address issues like how can technologies like wireless, mobile services etc. help in the bottom of the pyramid interventions for provision of citizen services, health expertise etc. The conference addressed the issues of content localisation,

infrastructure and power requirements, and other such issues. The conference was graced by R N Prabhakar, Member, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, R N Padukone, Senior Deputy Director General, Department of Telecommunications, Government of India, and other eminent experts from government and private sector. The speakers stressed that **as India is developing fast, mobile phones can play a very significant role in this**. Mobiles provides easy communication.

Community Radio India 2007

Community Radio India 2007: **Introduced as a new track in the eINDIA2007, the conference assumed great importance in the light of airwaves going public and grant of licenses being sanctioned to NGOs and civil bodies in the recent past in India**. The event was jointly supported by UN System including UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting , Government of India along with One World South Asia and Commonwealth of Learning. The key speakers included Asha Swarup, Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, Zohra Chatterji, Joint Secretary (Broadcasting), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Jocelyne Josiah, Communications Advisor, UNESCO, New Delhi, R. Sreedhar, Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, and other eminent experts in this field. Some major suggestions made by the eminent speakers included **use of All India Radio transmitters**, free of cost, till one's own are being funded, as these too like airwaves belong to people of India. **The Karnataka model should be adopted** by each of the state to have local funds for promoting low cost-Community Radio, **training should be imparted to use radio effectively** for development and cultural exploration. It was also recommended that the government **authorities should provide information on welfare activities of the government, women empowerment, health and rural development activities to community radios in the coverage area**.

i4d Film Festival

i4d Film Festival captured some of the short films which talked about the use of ICT tools in poverty alleviation, gender issues, health, human rights, education, governance, and more. **The Film Festival brought together over 20 organisations**. There was a sizable representation from the various community groups who submitted films. It **brought together experiences with community video from across the country**. The films were powerful, and articulated issues more cohesively than was possible in the written or spoken words. Most of the films were not in English, though subtitled. The themes were localised to the community which produced the film, yet, there was an **overwhelming response** leading to requests for the films to be screened not only across the country, but also in other countries such as Nepal and Malaysia. This was a proof of the fact that images communicate beyond language.

Valedictory

eINDIA 2007 concluded with the Valedictory addresses from Subhash C Khuntia, Joint Secretary, Ministry of HRD, Dr William Dhar, Director General, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, Partho Bhattacharya, Chairman, Coal India Ltd, Zohra Chatterjee, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. It also witnessed the Award giving to the winners as Power School and i4d innovators. Dr Ravi Gupta, the Executive Director and Dr M P Narayanan, the President of CSDMS extended profuse thanks to all delegates for making the conference successful.