Introduction to ICTD

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Internet access in rural areas
Video conferencing for tele-medicine
Community radio
Education

(a) Books in print

(b) Books on DVD
Voice messaging
Civic media

Asia Buzz: Revolution
How text messaging toppled
Joseph Estrada
By ERIC ELLIS

January 23, 2001
Web posted at 2:00 p.m. Hong Kong time, 11:00 a.m. EDT

WITNESS uses video and online technologies to open the eyes of the world to human rights violations.
Why now?

- Anybody’s guess
  - Cheaper computation (Moore’s Law)
  - Proliferation of mobile phones
  - The Internet has managed to convey the power of information
A research area?

- It rarely works! Working with people is hard
  - Community radio: My wife had ideas for some programs, but she was ignored because she was not participating in the NGO’s SHG program
  - Community radio: Nature of organization influences the kind of programs it creates: KMVS and DA
  - Mobile phones in Africa: Women rarely own cellphones, kept by men
- What may work can be completely counter-intuitive
  - Rural kiosk: Computers used to photoshop pictures, edit wedding videos
  - Interactive radio: Recorders helped women get their views to the radio station, gained respect with their men
A research area?

- **Goals**
  - Uncover factors that influence communities, people?
  - Create something useful that can help societies develop?
  - Eventually, translate into appropriate policies for widespread impact

- **Scope for impact: Huge!** Can this remove poverty? Can this open up new markets for companies?

- **What’s common to achieve these goals**
  - Understand the context in which people use these tools: Necessary to understand why something was successful or a failure
  - Closer to the way social scientists do experiments
Research area?

- Research method
  - Observe → Model and define problem → Hypothesis → Experiment → Conclusion
    - Test and control groups to check for differences
    - Qualitative and quantitative surveys
    - Carefully designed experiments to reduce chances of errors

- Examples of research questions
  - Revi Sterling: Does interactivity have any impact on the empowerment and status of women in the community?
  - Michael Best: Can video sharing and story telling help in post-conflict reconciliation?
  - Neil Patel: Do people attach the same credibility to local sources as they do to experts?
Course objectives

- Readings will give an idea of the different ways in which computer science can be used for development
- Guest lectures will give an idea of the people-related complexities in this area
- Other readings
  - Policy
    - Community driven radio or NGO driven? Subsidies? Free/cheaper cellphones for women? Free calls to home?
  - Financial sustainability
    - Failure of the rural entrepreneur model for kiosks? Scope for advertising?
Always keep in mind

“If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail”

Maslow, 1960s