



INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the role of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Internet usage for poverty alleviation in developed and developing countries. The study discovered that Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be used to alleviate poverty, if it is tailored to the needs of the poor and used in the right way for the right purpose. It can also boost the economic growth of developing countries by alleviating poverty. At the end of the study, it was concluded that if the developing countries can tap into the full potentials of ICTs, it is capable and able to turn any nation's economic and capital development. It was recommended among others that developing countries should invest more on information communication technologies in order to realize its full transformation power on their economy.

***Keyword:** Poverty Alleviation, Information Communication Technologies, Internet, Countries.*

Introduction

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is a tool for poverty alleviation when it is applied to meet the information and communication needs of the poor (Global Knowledge partnership, 2016). The focus of developing countries should be how they can use ICT to reduce the high rate of poverty in their countries.

For more than a decade, Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have played a key role in both economic growth and poverty reduction in developed countries (Okeuo and Maritimi 2014). Developed countries over the years, have increased in efficiency, provide access to new markets and services, and create new opportunity for income generation. Through all these, those that are called the “poor” in developed countries are almost the same like those we called referred to as the “rich” in developing countries.

Any approach in using ICTs in the interest of poverty alleviation has to be broad-based and tailored to various sectors and build inter-linkage. According to Uniamikogbo (1997), a study carried out in India, Jamaica and South Africa, the effectiveness of ICT in combating poverty depends on i) complementarities with other local level poverty alleviation programme/initiatives, ii) responding to the local community needs and iii) involving stakeholders in application and development.

ICT offers special opportunities to stimulate growth and increase innovation in every local setting, thereby enabling individuals and institutions to interact more productively with the global economy and the wider worlds. But to realize this potential, technologies must be part of mix of productivity changes and supporting capabilities. Developing countries must trend on the part that other developed countries have trend and also to seek for ways they can tap the full potential of ICT for meaningful poverty alleviation. With much support in the area of ICTs with the right policies and holistic approaches, ICTs will strengthen other multi-sectional



efforts that are required for poverty alleviation in developed countries including meeting the needs of the poor.

Concept of ICT

Information Communication Technologies have been defined in various ways. Union (2009) viewed ICT as an umbrella term which covers any communication devices of application encompassing radio, television, cellular, phones, computer and network, hardware and software, satellite system as well as the various services and application with them such as video conferencing and distance learning. Asimegbe and Ifeolu (2015) said that ICT encompasses equipment and services. They stated further that, ICT includes the computing industry (hardware, software, network, the internet and related services); electronic data processing and display (such as photocopies, cash registers calculators, and scanners, as well as a myriad of less well-known machines specifically tailored to production and manufacturing); telecommunication and related services (such as fixed and cellular telephones, facsimile machine, instant messaging, teleconferencing, and so on); and audio, video, DVDs, digital cameras, compact discs MP3 players among others.

Information Communication Technologies are advancing very fast today, even in developing countries, it has been regarded as the driving force behind the economy in every country. ICTs include communication devices, an application software, electronics network services including hardware, network services, telephone, fax multi-media, electronics news etc.

Insight on the Utilization of ICT in Developed Countries

Countries like America have tapped into the full potentials of ICTs. The developed countries see ICTs as asset to economic development and for poverty alleviation. It is believed that, all the sectors of the developed nations are influenced by the full utilization of Information Communication Technology.

Those that have fully implemented ICTs policies are more developed than non-ICT usage countries. For instance, it is unreasonable for an African to stay in United States of America (USA) without having the knowledge of ICT. These developed countries have been able to use ICTs in the area of agriculture. Industries, hospitals, space, and so on.

For the purpose of this paper, the author will focus more on America. The following table (1) shows the utilization of ICT in America when compared to the entire world.



ICT Usage Statistics for all the Americas

Table (1) North Central, South America and Caribbean

ICT USERS AND 2017 POPULATION STATS FOR THE AMERICA						
Regions	Population (2017 est.)	% pop America	ICT Users latest	% population (penetration)	% popAmerica	Face book users
North American	363,224,006	35.9%	32,068,243	88.1%		223,081,200
South America	426,548,298	42.2%	277,294,854	65.0%	45.3%	229,242,500
Central America	177,249,493	17.5%	90,116,568	50.8%	39.3%	86,760,000
Caribbean	43,806,851	4.3%	18,507,960	42.2%	12.8%	10,972,840
Total the American	1,010,828,651	100.0%	705,987,625	69.8%	2.6%	550,056,540
					100.0%	

Source: Internet world stats (2017)

Table (2) ICT usage in America vs. the rest of the world

ICT USERS STATS FOR ALL THE AMERICA IN MARCH, 2017						
The Americas	Population (2017 Est.)	% pop of world	ICT Users 31-March 2017	Peretiation (% pop)	Interest % Users	Face Book 30-June-2016
All Americas	1,010,828,651	13.4%	705,987,625	69.8%		
The World	6,508,200,319	86.6%	3,031,406,525	46.6%	18.9%	550,056,540
Total world	7,519,028,970	100%	3,737,394,150	49.7%	81.1%	1,129,376,990
					100.0%	1,679,433,530

Source: Internet world stats (2017)

ICTs and the Developed Countries

The information age has created new wealth and sustains one of the largest and unbroken growths in the economies of America and Europe (Ogunsola, 2015). Governments worldwide have recognized the role that information communication technology could play in socio-economic and poverty alleviation.

A number of countries especially those in developed world are putting in place policies and plans designed to transform their economic into information and knowledge economics. Some of these countries are USA, Canada and a number of European countries, as well as Asian countries like India, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan and South America countries.

Developed countries see ICTs and their deployment for socio-economic development as one area where they can quickly establish global dominance and reap tremendous payoff in terms of wealth creation and generation of high quality employment. On the other hand, some other developed countries regard the development and utilization of ICTs within their economy and society as a key component of their national vision to improve the quality of life, knowledge and international competitiveness.

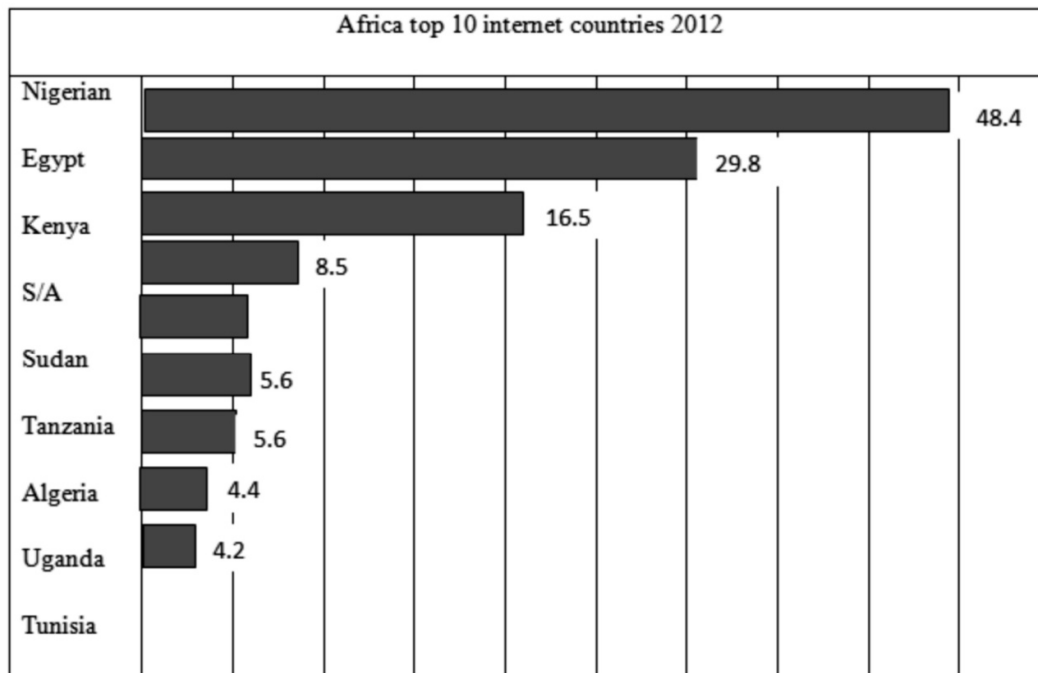
Faye (2006) pointed out that, ICTs are offering even less developed countries a window of opportunities to leapfrog the industrialization stage and transform their



economies into high value-added information economy that can compete with the advanced economy on the global world.

African Internet/ICT Usage and Statistics

Africa is the second-longest continent after Asia. It accounts for about 14.72% of the world's human population (Emeka, 2017). African is estimated to have 1,037,524,058 in June 30th, 2012, out of the population of 167,335,676 internet users. Nigeria has the highest number of internet users of about 48,366,179, followed by Egypt at 29,809,724, Morocco at 16 million, Kenya at 12 million and South Africa 8.5 million.



Source: Internet world stats

Poverty

Poverty is a condition of being poor Sokye and Zakka, (2009). It can also be referred to as a condition in which a person or group of persons are unable to satisfy their most basic and elementary requirements for human survival in terms of food nutrient, clothing, shelter, health, education, recreations and others. To the layman, it simply refers to members of the society who cannot afford their three square meals in a day. Obaseki (1997) opined that poverty is a ravaging economic and social phenomenon that manifests in the inability to acquire the basic necessities of life needed for a decent living, self-esteem and in the absence of the means of self-actualization.

Uniamikogbo (1997) identified the poor as those who are unable to contribute adequately to the production process to warrant an income, those for whom the economy has failed to provide jobs, that is, those who are willing and capable of



earning an adequate income if only jobs were available and those whose opportunities is to participate in the productive process were restricted by discrimination of various kinds, for example, sex, age, race, religion and others.

It should also be noted that though some people are rich while others are poor, yet the concept of poverty is a relative term, because a first class rich man in a particular place may be poorer than a third class man in other places.

Despite the fact that poverty is a relative term, economist have devised a means of identifying the status of absolute poverty. This is defined in terms of number of people living below specific minimum level of income (imaginary international poverty line which cuts across all countries regardless of the level of national per-capita income (Agbionu, 2002).

Effect of Poverty on a Developing Nation

One of the greatest problems confronting the developing countries today is the problem of poverty and unemployment this was the reason Asimegbe (2016) said that the sudden increase in kidnapping, robbing, insecurity, political war and so on, are majorly because of poverty. Some of the effects of poverty are:

- ❖ Poverty leads to corruption, disruption of family relations and social life as well as rise in crime rate, among other vices.
- ❖ Poverty is degrading to human beings and the life of those afflicted by it.
- ❖ Political instability and national insecurity and other negative effects of poverty. According to Onah (2006) poverty as a state of deprivation makes the deprived to be vulnerable and violent in nature!
- ❖ Poverty increases illiteracy and poor performance of political leaders. It deprived the poor electorates of having basic education, since they are not educated; it becomes difficult to impact democratic values, such as freedom of choice of candidate.
- ❖ Poverty can also lead to human trafficking, prostitution and the spread of HIV/AIDS, child labour and abuse of human and civil right.

The Roles of ICTs in Poverty Alleviation in Developing Countries

The developing countries have tapped into the full potential of ICTs and have been using it to develop their human, economic and material resources. Some of the roles of ICTs in poverty alleviation in developing countries are:

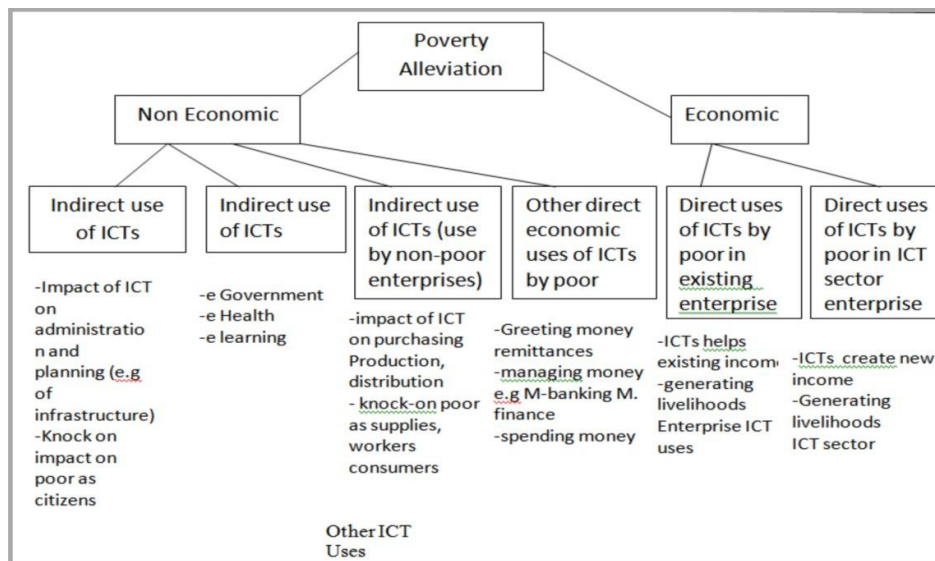
- ❖ Improving of the agriculture sector: ICTs can be used to develop and to rebrand the agricultural sector. Like some notable countries, farmers do not beg for customers, this is because they can be located through ICTs. Unlike the developing countries, a farmer can have a farm product, yet, no access to a prospective buyer and as such, the goods get spoiled in their farms. But with ICTs, agricultural products can be exposed and made known to the whole world without restriction of distance and place.
- ❖ Improve educational system: When the people in a country are well educated illiteracy will be reduced. But when the educated ones are less in number compared to a countries population, it brings poverty, ICTs will expose a



student or learner to various information, knowledge and understanding capable of making him creative.

❖ Vocational opportunities: A vocation according to Oladunjoye and Audu (2014) is what an individual practice to earn an income. It can be acquired through proper training either in vocational schools, apprenticeship with knowledgeable practitioners, or expression of talents. Some of the vocational opportunity that are presented by ICTs are

- Networking
- Programming
- Repairing and maintenances
- Computer sales
- Phone sales
- Parts of accessory sales
- Document processing
- Phone calls
- Website design
- e-commerce e.t.c



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Conclusion

Developing countries have not truly utilized the full potentials of ICTs in economic and human development like the developed countries. But, there is hope of bringing ICT into every sector in the developing countries because of ICTs sensitization and enlightenment by the world body.

If the developing countries can tap into the full potentials of ICTs, it is capable and able to turn any nation's economic and capital development. When this is so, it will create job for the poor and also alleviate their suffering.

Recommendations

- Developing countries should invest more on information communication technologies in order to realize its full transformation power on their economy.
- Government and other Non-governmental Agencies should enlighten the public on the benefits of ICT.

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