



IN BRIEF...

ICT for development

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has increased throughout the world, particularly after the advent of the Internet. Statistics show that most people living in the Western world have access to ICT in one form or another, but this is not the case for people living in developing countries. How can these countries take advantage of the opportunities generated by ICT? And how can the poor people in these countries benefit from ICT?

The use of ICT as a powerful tool for economic growth is a step on the way to increasing economic growth, which is one of the prerequisites for poverty reduction. The expansion of internationalisation makes it increasingly important for developing countries to actively participate and make their voices heard in international political processes. In this respect the use of ICT can sometimes be the key that permits greater participation.

There is an ongoing process of integration of ICT into different sectors in developing countries. This creates opportunities, but major challenges still exist. The infrastructure for telecommunications and electricity is often poorly developed, particularly in rural areas where most people live. This makes it difficult to spread the use of ICT over large areas. Education and training in ICT is another area where there are shortcomings. When ICT is introduced, the “digital divide” in a country is considerably magnified. People with resources benefit from all the oppor-

tunities created by ICT, while poor people never obtain access to the new technology.

Where contributing to economic growth in developing countries is concerned, one major task for development cooperation is to support the ongoing process of integration of ICT and to support development that reduces the digital divide in the partner countries.

Today Sida is working with ICT at all levels in society in order to achieve the desired results. Some examples:

- At the overall level support is provided for policy development, i.e. the priorities that should be made to achieve the best results. Here support is also given for changes to legislation and regulations.
- Most of Sida’s ICT support is directed towards the institutional level. The development of infrastructure and education programmes at university level are examples of this, as is the introduction of ICT in the develop-

ment of the public administration and in institutions of central importance for society.

- Direct support to increase access to ICT, for example spreading the Internet to schools in order to give students and teachers access to information, to community centres and to non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

At the international level there are various ongoing initiatives that discuss, draw attention to and support the integration of ICT in developing countries. Sida is participating in various contexts, for example through representation in the UN ICT Task Force and in programmes of EU cooperation. Sida is also supporting a network for NGOs working with ICT.

Support for the integration of ICT in developing countries can be found in all fields in which Sida is active. In order to further strengthen its efforts to integrate ICT, Sida has established a secretariat for this purpose.

For further information contact the head of Sida’s ICT for Development Secretariat:
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Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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