

Effectiveness of using ICT in Gemidiriya: A study based on Hattellegoda GS division in Rathnapura District

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The Gemidiriya programme is one of the major community development programmes in Sri Lanka, implemented under the Ministry of Economic Development to improve the living conditions of the rural communities in Uva and Southern provinces. In this project, ICT has been introduced as a main communication strategy to strengthen the community operations and ICT is the emerging development communication method to support development operations to increase awareness among villagers by providing information related to social and economic programs such as markets, employment opportunities. But the best practice of ICT is a problem in rural areas not only because of issues with connectivity but also because of the lack of capacity to use the new tools and relevant content provided for the rural people. The objective of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of ICT in community operations. Other objectives were to scrutinize the nature and extent in use of ICT and to examine the impact of ICT on community operations. This study was conducted in Hattellegoda Gemidiriya village organization. To carry out the study qualitative and quantitative methods were used, namely, case studies, in-depth interviews and perusal of Gemidiriya website. At the introductory stage of the project, mostly training workshops had been organized to train villagers to use ICT. Establishing an ICT center, giving individual access and hands on experience, uploading information on Gemidiriya web, teleconferencing with other Gemidiriya organizations and Gemidiriya directors via skype were significant at project implementation period. When the project came to the end, more male villagers were confident to use ICT than female villagers. But a very few have accessed ICT individually and they have rarely used it for market opportunities and self employments. ICT has been used mostly for deferent administrative functions and it was helpful to maintain project transparency. This study concludes that ICT as a main communication strategy has not made a major impact at an individual level but it had a significant impact on the organizational level.

Keywords: Community development, ICT, Communication strategies, Effectiveness