



**DIGITAL
EMPOWERMENT
FOUNDATION**

**'The Report on the National Consultative Summit on
"Digital Minorities: Leveraging ICT & Digital Media
for Inclusive Development of Minority Communities"
at 8th Manthan Award & Digital Festival for
Development on 2nd December, 2011'**

Organised by

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Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)

www.defindia.net

&



National Commission for Minorities (NCM)

<http://ncm.nic.in>



A. INTRODUCTION

The Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) organized the National Consultation Summit on '*Digital Minorities: Leveraging ICTs & Digital Media for inclusive development of minority Communities*' with a support from the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) on 2 December 2011 under the umbrella of 8th Manthan Award & Digital Festival for Development on 2nd December, 2011 of in addressing the much evident development and digital divides among minority communities in India especially among Muslims.

The half-day consultation was aimed to identify, deliberate and discuss in focused group sessions key issues in development and digital backwardness of minority groups in the country. It is to contribute to identify and provide a thrust in adopting various Information Communication Technology and digital media tools and applications to meet traditional and emerging challenges facing the minorities – touching upon critical development and governance indices.

The national workshop provided a platform for government, academia, civil society, experts and intellectuals and other stakeholders to enter into dialogue in deliberating on development challenges faced by minorities in India and talking on solutions through ICTs and information medium for redressal of the same. This platform shall provide a channel to policy makers and policy advocates to identify and focus on policy areas around ICT for minority communities. It shall also an effort toward building uniform policy and programme declarations for further follow and action-taken steps.

B. BACKGROUND

India is among the most diverse society in the world, comprising people from all the major religions in the world. Even though, India comprises 82% Hindus of the population, still 149 million Muslims live in the country, making it the second largest population of Muslims in the world. Other minority groups include 2.4% Christians and 1.9% Sikhs, and others (include Buddhists, Anglo Indians, Parsis, and others).

Indian minorities and particularly the largest among them, the Muslims, who have been historically disadvantaged in spite of the Constitutional Safeguards, continue to live in poverty and backwardness. However, since independence, the government has addressed most of the issues with the establishment of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) in 1978 as a nodal agency to fulfill



development objectives of minorities and the Sachar Committee to empower Muslims.

Issues & Challenges in ICT for Development for Minorities

- Low penetration of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) amongst the minority groups especially among Muslims for the advancement of their educational and human resource development needs; low level of ICT skills is depriving minority youths in various knowledge led national development programmes
- Low level and lack of usage of ICTs for business, livelihood and enterprise development among minorities and mainstreaming them with the larger knowledge led social and economic growth
- The lack of information in minority communities – information that would enable them to make informed decisions about their own development
- The lack of mechanisms that would enable minority communities to generate and share information with other communities for national and international development.

In order to overcome from above challenges and bring visibly evident development exclusion of minorities, the digital exclusion is equally palpable. The reach of information communication technology led development interventions has by and large failed to reach the minority locations and citizens. The two folded missing areas are – using ICTs as an end in terms of attaining ICT related jobs and opportunities; and using ICTs as leveraging tools to improve upon and meet the glaring challenges in social and economic indicators – education backwardness, lack of skills, low income, and lack of employment provisions and so on. Thus, it becomes must that digital inclusion efforts to be taken up in large scale to prop up and upgrade socio-economic status of minorities with focus on Muslims and other minority communities, including tribals, dalits, and other backward communities.

C. SUMMIT BACKGROUND

In order to address these challenges and bring a single platform for all stakeholders to deliberate, discuss, share, experience and emerge with a concrete set of recommendations as to how Information Communication Technologies can be leveraged to scale up educational, skill development, capacity building, livelihood, entrepreneurship development and promotion of



minorities in India with focus on the Muslim community and other minority communities, including tribals, dalits, differently-abled community, etc.

Thus, Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) and the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) organized the National Consultation Summit on *'Digital Minorities: Leveraging ICTs & Digital Media for inclusive development of minority Communities'* on 2 December 2011. The consultation built a singular platform for all stakeholders from government, department, agencies, industry, civil society, academia, independent experts and others to share their views, opinions, inputs, suggestions on a wide area of topics.

D. ORGANIZERS

DEF: Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), a Delhi based not-for-profit organization, registered under Societies Act XXI of 1860 in the year 2002, working with a mission to create economic and commercial viability using means of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT). Since its inception in December 2002, DEF has engaged itself into number of activities while pursuing its mission and objectives of ICT delivery and promotion in India.

NCM: The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) is a body constituted by the Government of India to monitor and evaluate the progress of people classified as minorities by the Indian government. Essentially the minorities in India consist of followers of all religions other than Hinduism and weaker sections in the Hindu community. The NCM adheres to the UN Declaration of 18 December 1992 which states that "States shall protect the existence of the National or Ethnic, Cultural, Religious and Linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity."

E. SUMMIT OBJECTIVES

- Sharing views and experience on range and magnitude of development and digital divides among minorities in India
- Exchanging views, thoughts, experience on existing and scope for ICT initiatives to empower minorities
- Emerging with working framework with necessary inputs, suggestions, comments, recommendations on ways and means to deploy ICTs to scale up social and economic indicators of minority development.



F. SUMMIT BROAD AREAS

- The magnitude and extent of digital exclusion of minorities especially among the Muslims in various national development initiatives; this estimation in terms of usage of ICT tools led by Internet, mobile, digital and social media applications to add value to existing living conditions and having opportunities; this estimation at various levels – central, state levels, private, industry, and at other levels
- The scope and existence of sustainable ICT programmes for minorities led by government agencies
- Opportunities for ICT solutions to meet development and growth needs of minorities
- Gap areas in policy focus and need for a renewed thrust to mainstream minorities in 21st century knowledge led global economy and society

G. SUMMIT FOCUS

The Summit was structured into three broad themes namely;

1. Digital Minorities, Digital Divide & Digital Inclusion
2. Economic & Social Advancement & inclusive ICT tools
3. Programme design, Implementation & sustainable ICT approach

The first session was specifically focused on policy and programme gap areas that need to be adopted and bridge development and digital divides among minorities' vis-à-vis other socio-religious groups. The Summit also focused on need for an advanced policy and programme approach for minorities with a new found thrust in ICT for development especially Muslims .

The next session focused on the scope, relevance and need to mainstream minorities especially Muslims in ICT for development efforts in India. Under this session, various case studies represented how ICT applications and devices could be utilized for empowering these communities. At least 10 case studies were shared on the Digital Minorities Summit where diverse minority group like dalits, tribals, muslims, who have been using intervention of ICT tools in improving the life of common man at the last mile.



H. SPEAKERS

a. Guest of Honor

Mr. Salman Khurshid, Honourable Minister, Minority Affairs and Law & Justice, Govt. of India

b. Welcome Address By

Mr. Osama Manzar, Founder & Director, Digital Empowerment Foundation

c. Power Panel Speakers

1. Ms. Syeda Imam, Member, National Commission for Minorities (NCM)
2. Mr. Syed Zameer Pasha, Principal Secretary to Government, Minority Welfare Department & Member, State Minority Commission, Karnataka
3. Mr. H Abdur Raqeeb, General Secretary, Indian Centre for Islamic Finance (ICIF), New Delhi
4. Mr. Amir Ullah Khan, Deputy Director, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
5. Mr. Basheerhamad Shadrach, Development Consultant, New Delhi
6. Mr. Ibrahim Ahmad, Group Editor, CyberMedia

d. Case Presentation Speakers

1. Mr. Hisham Mundol, India Representative, Wikimedia Foundation
2. Mr. Rajen Varada, Founder & Director, Technology for the People (TFTP) Bangalore
3. Mr. Mohammad Tarique, Founder, Koshish
4. Mr. Akmal Yazdani, ICT In-charge, M.P. Waqf Board, Bhopal
5. Mr. Nishant Dhawan, Head - Marketing (ICT), IL&FS Education
6. Mr. George Abraham, CEO, Score Foundation
7. Mr. Naseer Hashmi, SMS One, Maharashtra
8. Mr. Rajnikant Diwedi, HWA, Varanasi, UP
9. Mr. Unnikrishnan, Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (CDIT)

I. SUMMIT PREAMBLE

The Summit started by Mr. Osama Manzar, Founder & Director of DEF, in establishing the concept behind the Summit – how Information Communication and Technology (ICT) tools and applications can help in facilitating social



cultural and economic need of the minority groups. Sharing his ground experiences from Chanderiyaan project, he described how technologies and media applications have been working on empowering various communities. These technology, communication and media can be utilized as resources to bring these under-developed communities into the mainstream community. Initializing the Summit, he welcomed all speakers and thanked them for accepting the invitation.

J. SUMMIT BYTES

I. Session-I: Digital Minorities, Digital Divide & Economic & Social Advancement with inclusive ICT tools

i. Miss. Sayeeda Imam, Member, National Commission for Minorities (NCM)

Miss Syeda raised the issue of women illiteracy rate across Indian and highlighted that the women literacy rate in any state is not up-to-the mark. However, there are states, where women groups have utilized these tools and application in improving their lives. Sharing about the Sakshar initiative of MHRD, she explained the Ministry of Human Resource Development have been using technologies in training women to learn Hindi in 35 days. She urged that policy related to these minority communities are presently on paper and there is requirement to formulate and implement a stronger policy towards improvising and empowering these communities, especially for women. According to Miss Syeda, education is one of the important tools that can bring major difference in these marginalized communities, including the communities who are deprived from education. Giving an example of Khan Academy, Miss Syeda recommended that these kinds of ICT applications like e-Learning modules can bring revolution in educating girl child. The advent of Cloud technology can bring education at the doorsteps and girl child can gain education at anywhere and anytime.

ii. Mr. Syed Zameer Pasha, Principal Secretary to Government, Minority Welfare Department & Member, State Minority Commission, Karnataka

Mr. Pasha started his discussion with deliberation on the status of Muslim community in India with respect to education, social and ICT illiterate. Emphasizing on the situation of Muslim community, Mr. Pasha recommended



to delivering the basic training on benefits of ICT applications and services to most disadvantaged communities. He also urged that all Arabic Madrassas should also be connected through satellite and ICT should become part of their curriculum for imparting both theological and practical education to the students as well as the teachers. The usage of information, communication and technology can empower deprived communities economically and socially. At last, he urged NGOs like DEF to promote ICT and conduct developmental activities.

iii. Mr. Basheerhamad Shadrach, Development Consultant, New Delhi

In the context of the National Commission for Minorities that promotes the Prime Minister's 15 point Agenda, Mr. Shadrach raised an eye opener question,

"Who actually belongs to minority communities? People who are deprived of education, or who are deprived of employability, or who belong to disabled community?"

Referring to PM's 15 point agenda, Mr Shadrach highlighted that agenda is very comprehensive the way the minorities remains chained in the main stream agenda of the country. He shared the information about the Prime Minister's 15-point agenda which has many good schemes but its implementation is not done properly. Further, Mr. Basheerhamad pointed out it is a responsibility that NGO and other development sector to monitor how these policies have been implemented at the ground level and that is where ICT can play fare and an important role in accessing and analyzing data and communicate on a regular basis. He suggested that a think tank comprising of members from government, NGOs & Minorities should be made to continuously monitor the conditions of minorities and implementation of policies at the ground level. On the point of government's policy targeting specifically to these communities is missing in India. He concluded the session with the setting up of the Minority Developmental Goal and a Minority Media Channel that can highlight or speak for minority.

iv. Mr. Ibrahim Ahmad, Group Editor, CyberMedia

Mr. Ahmad initiated the discussion with a point on using word, 'Minority' for addressing these communities. Focusing on the opportunity that ICT is providing to everyone, Mr. Ahmad shared that a big wave of ICT is taking



place in India, and no community should be deprived of that wave. He supported that NGOs, government and other stakeholders are playing prominent role in ensuring that every life should get a touch of ICT. Giving an example of Sam Pritroda's 'Meta Universities' model, he urged that NGOs working with minorities and working on the model of connecting universities is very much significant in connecting these communities. He also mentioned that media can a vital role in spreading awareness about ICTs and how it could be utilized specifically for minority communities.

v. Mr. Amir Ullah Khan, Deputy Director, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Mr. Amir initiated the discussion with the empowerment of local languages like Urdu's role in IT empowerment. He urged NGOs like DEF should come forward and focus on areas where collective efforts of minority can take place. He also recommended that NGOs working in ground have range of case studies, which could be utilized by the Ministry in showcasing that how these communities can utilize the power of ICT tools and applications for improving their lives.

Key Note Speech by Salman Khurshid, Honourable Minister, Minority Affairs and Law & Justice, Govt. of India

Honorable Minister, Mr. Khurshid firstly congratulated the efforts of all those people who are bringing in change in the society through their actions. He stated,

"Working with ICT in an overall cluster development mode, including education, livelihood, women empowerment and health, are the best way to strengthen the minorities, dalits, and other impoverished communities."

Giving examples of Varanasi and Chanderi, he recommended that these models should be replicated in other regions of the country, not only to empower minority communities but also to empower deprived and under-developed societies. Mr. Khurshid emphasized there is a need to develop cluster-based models like Chanderiyaan not only to improve the lives of marginalized communities but also preserving heritage, cultural and social values.

The basic requirement is to think 'Out of the Box' merging commerce, cultural and tourism along with preservation of heritage. He further added that to overcome the barriers in the path of minority development extensive



Public Private Partnership (PPP) model should be followed and more importance should also be given to the social organizations and government tie-ups in the country.

The Ministry has allocated to Waqf Board for their digitization and it is expected that in couple of years all the Waqf boards in the country will be digitally connected, but digitization will not solve all the problems related to it. He agreed that digitization and the use of ICT application and services is a solution of many challenges and bring the transparency and accountability in the system. He concluded the speech by stating,

“This is age of sharing knowledge and using technology as a tool, we can fight with challenges like poverty, unemployment, education, health, etc.”

II. Session II: Programme Design, Implementation & Sustainable ICT approach

The second session of the Summit was chaired by Mr. Syed Zameer Pasha, Principal Secretary to Government, Minority Welfare Department & Member, State Minority Commission, Karnataka and co-chaired by Mr. Basheerhamad Shadrach, Development Consultant, New Delhi. At the second session, various case studies across the country had been showcased.

Case Study Presentations

i. Mr. Abdur Raqeeb, General Secretary - Indian Centre for Islamic Finance, New Delhi

Mr. Raqeeb highlighted that many changes have been taking place because of digital world that also changed the concept of education system from teacher-based learning mechanism to computer-based learning mechanism. He suggested that there is a need to develop learning-based model connected with livelihoods of people. There is a need for participatory contribution from government, NGOs, corporate stakeholders to connect deprived communities

ii. Mr. Hisham Mundol, India Representative, Wikimedia Foundation

Mr. Mundol from Wikimedia Foundation affirmed that sharing knowledge and information is the first step to empower minority and Wikimedia is a platform to raise voice, to write and to speak and to deliver the message of



the unheard. Wikimedia is committed towards providing access free and one of the things that we would like to work on is providing offline access to all these devices where internet access is not available.

iii. Mr. Rajen Varada, Founder & Director, Technology for the People (TFTP) Bangalore

Mr. Varada shared the goals of setting up the organization, TFTP to promote developmental issues through appropriate technology and support the use of ICT in expanding the existing activities in areas of education, hygiene, child rehabilitation and economic empowerment. He highlighted how innovative technologies can be leveraged to bring about economic empowerment to marginalized communities. Giving example of pilot project started by TFTP in Hyderabad, Mr. Varada stated that they used animation technology to empower girls and women of minority working on chicken embroidery. He also emphasized that there is a need to identify right skills of every individual.

iv. Mr. Mohammad Tarique, Founder, Koshish

Mr. Mohammad Tariq shared how Koshish is using ICT practices in raising voice against the criminalization of homeless people and developed reports on criminal cases and reduced criminalization as well. Koshish have been providing ICT based vocational training programmes to marginalized communities with aim at increasing awareness about these issues in the society. Koshish has actively engaged such groups in providing training skills and also formed groups to monitor homeless services throughout the country.

v. Mr. Akmal Yazdani, ICT In-charge, MP Waqf Board, Bhopal

Mr. Akmal shed light on the Waqf Board, which has been continuously involved in empowering the Muslim community to a larger extent. In order to digitize all major documents and secure them from physical changes, Waqf Board has now computerized Waqf Properties under this project. In today's date, Waqf Board is now entirely digitized and now huge database could accessed online. Thus, utilizing ICT practices and applications, Waqf Board is not only empowering its employees but also empowering disadvantaged communities by spreading awareness about ICT tools and applications.



vi. Mr. Nishant Dhawan, Head - Marketing (ICT), IL&FS Education

Mr. Dhawan explained ICT practices and applications have been utilized by IL&FS to provide employability to youth belonging to BPL (below poverty line) families and minority communities. IL&FS has established IT infrastructure in over 5000 schools in Gujarat. Whereas in West Bengal IL&FS has promoted and used ICT application and services in Urdu-medium schools. The project has been extended to 51 schools and thereafter to 90 Govt. aided schools and which included 40 govt. and 75 Urdu medium based institutions.

The product, K-Yan has been developed to meet the urgent need for a low-cost new media product, specially designed for group learning in schools and other learning communities. The K-Yan Community Computer combines the function of a multimedia computer, large format flat television, DVD/ VCD/ CD player, CD writer, projector, Internet, Video conferencing and Visual Audio System in a single compact unit. The content is translated into Urdu to make it consumable by the underprivileged and illiterate. The biggest benefit of implementing this project has been that students have started coming back to the school because of the multimedia methods of teaching.

vii. Mr. George Abraham, CEO, SCORE Foundation

Mr. Abraham raised the issue of differently-abled communities and how ICT tools and applications have been helping supporting and motivating visually impaired individuals, so that society can see their potential and they can be part of the mainstream. SCORE's project aims to facilitate 16 billion visually-impaired people to educate and empowered them, so that they could also contribute to the economy. SCORE also provides hotline number that also gives information about the various courses offered.

viii. Mr. Unnikrishnan, Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (CDIT)

Mr. Unnikrishnan shed light on the plight of condition of this minority population in the state. He shared that the state known for its literacy rate & human development, but there lives a group of deprived and marginalized people with less than 10 % of the population whose issues are not being comprehensively addressed. He highlighted that the reason that has restricted this minority population to be deprived and marginalized is because it is not being seriously addressed by the mainstream. He further



added that the aid that was made available took a lot of time to reach the minority and keeping the same limitations in mind & to speed up this process an ICT concept called e-House has been implemented in which the people receive details on SMS about the timings on when they are required to report and collect the aid from the office.

ix. Mr. Rajnikant Diwedi, Founder & Director, HWA, Varanasi, UP

Mr. Rajnikant shared his experiences of developing Muslim community through collective efforts. He shared that Education is one of the most important aspect in development and a matter of concern in Muslim community. Use of combination of technical and non technical methods to promote education among youngsters has proven fruitful.

HWA since 1993 has been addressing the need of education in rural Varanasi. In the current session, 2019 children are being educated and they are all from minority community.

By creating the Village Education Committees, HWA has been organizing educational rallies for spreading the message of education, importance and need for the children among the community. He concluded by sharing that the biggest challenge is to kill the fear among the Muslim community especially Muslim women and encourage them to come forward to join hands in the process of minority development.

x. Mr. Naseer Hashmi, SMS One, Maharashtra

Mr. Hashmi, whose organization, SMS One has been providing SMS based information to grassroots organizations and citizens, shared that SMS One is aiming to spread awareness and empowering minority and under-developed communities by using ICT applications and tools like SMS alert.

Mr. Naseer Hashmi whose organization provides SMS based information to the grassroots citizens. The basic aim behind the project was that because of a wrong source of information the youth of minority get indulged in unfruitful activities like violence which ultimately hampers his personal growth. The benefits provided by the project is free information through SMS regarding government schemes, scholarship schemes and various other schemes related to minority.



K. RECOMMENDATIONS

- First and the foremost recommendation that emerged from the Summit is that the 15 point agenda approved by the govt. is very comprehensive and it needs to be strengthened.
- ‘The word, *Minority*’ should not be encouraged to address these communities’ was the one of the major points that has come out from the Summit.
- The question about defining Minority Community is not specifically related to only Muslim community but also include people who deprived of ICT capabilities, education, employability, disabled community.
- The necessity of cluster-based model like Chanderi has needs to be developed and built. This model should be a combination of culture, tradition, history and these things can help in development of tourism. Like Chanderi, DEF has put an effort towards developing a cluster-based model in which DEF has combined tourism, cultural, and heritage all together on single model.
- One of the major recommendations that emerged out is organisations like DEF, which have been using ICT applications and tools to empower grassroots organizations and marginalized communities, can play vital role in compiling and developing case study booklet in showcasing how ICT can help in uplifting these communities. DEF has around 3000 examples of projects that have strengthened strata of society in rural community.
- The reach of education to these deprived communities using e-Learning modules. These e-Learning modules can bring revolution in bringing education at the doorsteps and girl child can gain education at anywhere and anytime.
- One of the major recommendations is that government, educational institutions and NGOs should come forward to continuously monitor the conditions of such marginalized and under-developed communities and implementation of policies at the ground level. It is also important to set up minority developmental goal and a minority media channel that can highlight or speak for minority.
- Another major recommendation is that Arabic Madrassas and religion educational institutes should be connected through satellite and ICT should become part of their curriculum for imparting both theological and practical education to the students as well as the teachers.
- The need for participatory contribution from government, NGOs and other agencies.



L. SPEAKERS' QUOTES

“Working with ICT in an overall cluster development mode, including education, livelihood, women empowerment and health, are the best way to strengthen the minorities, dalits, and other impoverished communities.”

Salman Khurshid

Honorable Minister of the Ministry of Law and Justice and Ministry of Minority Affairs

“Since 60 years of independence, I have never thought of myself as Minority. The minorities especially the Muslims are economically, educationally and socially backward. We have always been away from the mainstream and we were isolated from the national integration. Now, when we are exchanging assets to empower Muslims educationally, hope best use of information and technology to empower our community economically and it is indeed the need of the hour.”

Mr. Syed Zameer Pasha

**Principal Secretary to Government, Minority Welfare Department & Member,
State Minority Commission, Karnataka**

“Working with ICT in an overall cluster development mode, including education, livelihood, women empowerment and health, are the best way to strengthen the minorities, dalits, and other impoverished communities.”

**Mr. Basheerhamad Shadrach
Development Consultant, New Delhi**

“ICT has empowered the lives of Chanderi people in many ways not only provided them means of communication but also fused technology with traditional skills and facilitates the process of value addition at all levels. It helps in enhancing the existing skills in weaving and textile designing, thereby increasing the weavers earning capacity. The e-Commerce platform has enabled them to market and sell their products online.”

**Shahid Ahmad
Project Director of Chanderiyaan**



“Sahariya tribes have set up 5 digital centres in their region in improving their lives in vital areas of education, health and livelihood using ICT tools.”

Motilal
Founder of Sankalp Foundation

“Now, the MP Waqf Board has adopted the Scheme of Computerization Records formulated by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, (MoMA), keeping in view of JPC Recommendations. Computerization of all Meta Data Physical has been made of all Waqf Estates.”

Akmal Yazdani
ICT Incharge of M.P. Waqf Board, Bhopal



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