

Role of Telecentres in Gender Empowerment:

*Do telecentres really work
for Women?*



Agenda

- Back ground
- Debates on Telecentre Failures
- Diversity of Telecentres
- Debates on Gender Issue with Telecentres
- Suggested Way forward

Back ground

What is a Telecentre?

- “a small room equipped with one or more computers and a long-distance telephone or wireless telephone”.



Rogers, E.M., Shukla, P., (2001), The role of telecenters in development communication and the digital divide. Journal of Development Communication 2 (12), 26-31. (http://wsispapers.choike.org/role_telecenters-development.pdf.)

History of Telecentres

- “The first telecentres were established in the early 1980s in Scandinavia (particularly Denmark) as 'social experiments' in promoting the use of advanced Information and Communications Technology”

Benjamin, P. (2001), *Does 'Telecentre' mean the centre is far away? Telecentre development in South Africa*, The Southern African Journal of Information and Communication, Vol 1, No 1

History of Telecentres

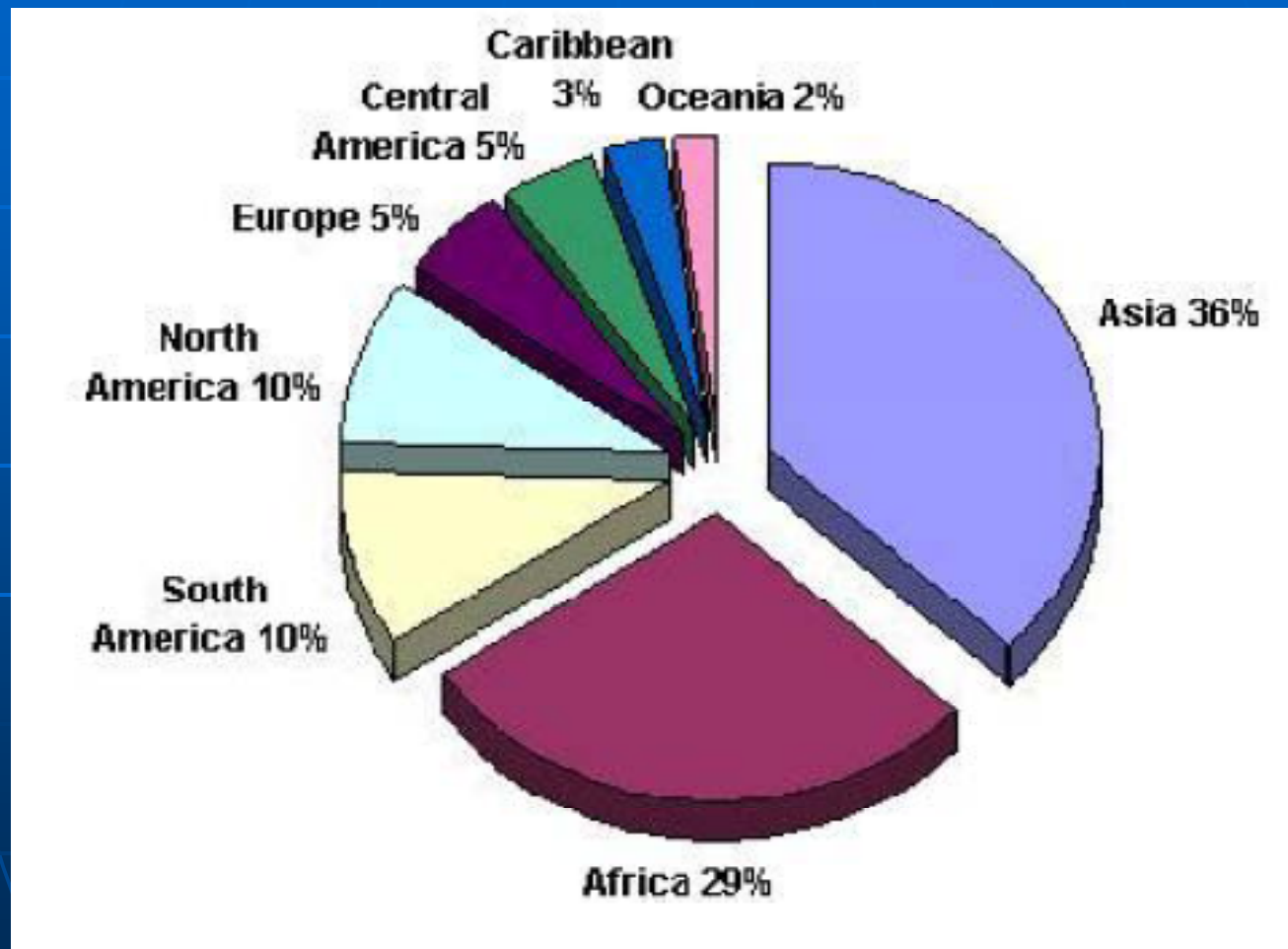
Phase 1 (1980's)		Phase 2 (1990's)		
Opportunities for Rural people in North	To become familiar with ICT's	Developing Countries	Marginalized People	Urban Slums
	To work from Home "Telework"			Rural People
	Telecottage Industry			
Urban poor, e.g. Harlem	Providing access to ICT's they couldn't otherwise afford		Excluded People	Women
				Elderly
				Disabled

Roman, R., Colle, R. (2002), *Themes and Issues in telecentres Sustainability*, Paper no. 10, Working Paper Series, Institute for Development Policy and Management University of Manchester, Precinct Centre, Manchester, M13 9GH, UK

Evolution Of Telecentres

1990's	Isolated pilots, primarily donor funded, often lacking long term sustainability, each trying to deal with all aspects of telemeters on its own
	Led by NGOs and development agencies
	Limited services, content, and applications
	Challenging policy and regulatory environment
2000-2010	Emergence of networks and telecentre ecosystems
	Larger-scale pilots in some countries—increased Geographical reach
	New connectivity and hardware technologies and new business and organizational models
	Increased involvement of government, the academic community, and the private sector
	Broader range of services and applications across sectors
2010-2020	Improved policy and regulatory environment (in many countries)
	Fully developed and dynamic telecentre ecosystem at national, regional, and international levels
	Large-scale capacity building
	Documented socioeconomic impacts (increased economic opportunities, access to health, education, government services, etc.)
	Self-priming pump
	Top-down delivery of connectivity and bottom-up approach to the supply and demand of relevant services
	Extensive partnerships and the unbundling of services
An enabling policy and regulatory environment in all but a handful of countries	

Telecentre initiatives launched Globally



Source: www.digitaldividend.org/ 02/2007

Debates on Telecentre Failures

Telecentres Failure

- “**only one out of every one hundred** telecentres are really useful for the local community when they have been set up, in terms of supporting development and social change”

Dagron, G. (2001), “Prometheus Riding a Cadillac? Telecentres as the promised flame of knowledge”, *Journal of Development Communication: Special Issue on Telecentres*12[2], (<http://ip.cals.cornell.edu/commdev/documents/jdc-dagron.doc>)

10 - Key Debates: Telecentre Failure

1. “North Knows the Best”

(Dagron, 2001; Gomez and Ospina, 2001; Heeks, 2002)

2. No consideration to community needs

(Dagron, 2002; Heeks, 2002; Rossener, 2006; Osborne, 2007)

3. Exclusion of marginalized

(Roman and Colle, 2002; Huyer and Sikoska, 2003; Harris et al, 2007)

4. Irrelevant information

(Heeks, 2002; Roman and Colle, 2002; Green, 2003)

5. Lack of localized content

(Heeks, 2001; Dagron, 2001; Green, 2003; Prasad and Mishra, 2006; Osborne, 2007)

10 - Key Debates: Telecentre Failure

6. Illiteracy

(Dagron, 2001; Green, 2003)

7. Inaccessibility by community

(McConnell, 2001; Roman and Colle, 2001; Proenza, 2001)

8. Insecure locations

(Jorge, 2000; Heeks, 2001; Oestmann and Dymond, 2001; Mahmood, 2005)

9. Donor funding

(Proenza, 2001; Harris et al, 2002; Green, 2003; Conroy, 2006)

10. Expensive Services

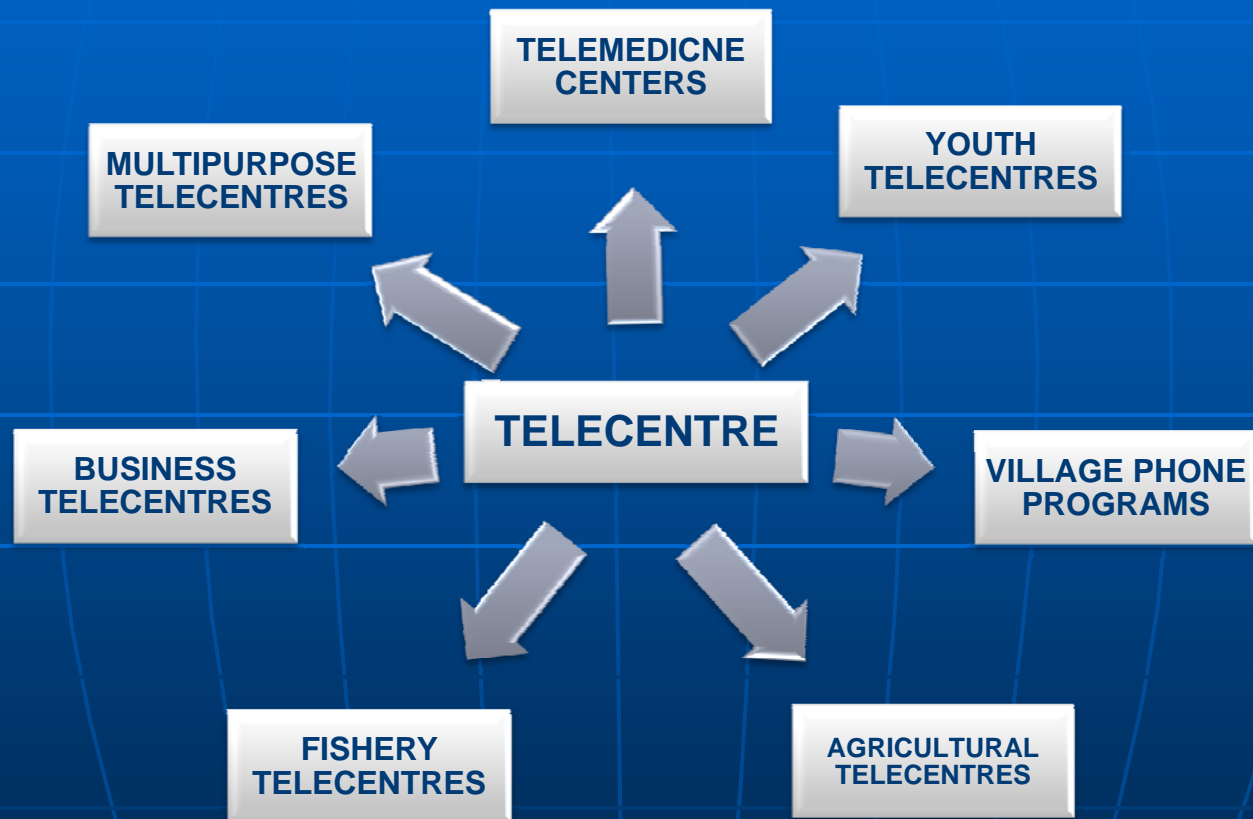
(Proenza, 2001; Roman and Colle, 2002; Conroy, 2006)

Diversity of Telecentres

Diversity of Telecentres

1. *Community Centre*
2. *Telemedicine Centres*
3. *Youth Telecentres*
4. *Village Phone programs*
5. *Agricultural Telecentres*
6. *Fishery Telecentres*
7. *Business telecentres*
8. *Multipurpose Telecentres*

Diversity of Telecentres



Debates on Gender Issues with Telecentres

8 Key Debates: Gender

1. Women are not considered in policy making

(Pichappan, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Jenson, 2006; Gurumurthy, Singh, 2006; Wanasundera, 2006; Kuga, Rinalia, Cino, 2007)

2. Illiteracy

(Huyer, 2002; Green, 2003; Wanasundera, 2006; Conroy, 2006)

3. Discrimination

(Markoff, 1989; Alper, 1993; Wanasundera, 2006; Harris, Yogeesavarana, Lee, 2007)

4. Technophobia

(Koirala, Acharya, 2005)

8 Key Debates: Gender

5. Lack of Access and Mobility

(Pichappan, 2003; Gurumurthy, 2004)

6. Social and Cultural constraint

(Huyer and Sikoska,2003; Wanasundera, 2006; Walsham et al , 2007)

7. Content and Relevancy

(Heeks, 2001; Roman and Colle, 2002; Green, 2003; Osborne, 2007)

8. Location

(McConnell. 2001; Proenza, 2001; Roman and Colle, 2001; Mahmood, 2005; Conroy, 2006)

Key Debate— Women in Policies

- “Largely because of the absence of gender-sensitive policies and design rules, many women are still **unable to harness** new technologies to redefine their roles in the increasingly interconnected world community”

Johnson K. (2003), *Telecenters and the gender dimension: an examination of how Engendered telecenters are diffused in Africa*, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University, Washington, DC

Key Debate - Technophobia

- “**Girls were hesitant** to even touch the computer since they feared it will explode in case they make any mistakes. Boys on the other hand found themselves computer-friendly”

Koirala, Acharya, (2005), *from access to engagement, community access Centres, UNESCO.*

Key Debate – **IT** Illiteracy

- “Lack of computer skills is a **severe barrier** for women and girls in accessing the new ICTs”

Green L., (2003), *Gender-based Issues and Trends in ICT Applications in Education in Asia and the Pacific*

Key Debate - Illiteracy

- “When literacy became a hindrance, SEWA members found a solution. They learnt **video vocabulary**”

Green L., (2003), Gender-based Issues and Trends in ICT Applications in Education in Asia and the Pacific

Key Debate - Discrimination

- “Many parents tend to **encourage only their sons to attend computer** camps and are willing to spend more money to send their sons to these camps than their own daughters”

Gurer, D. , Camp, T. (2002), *Investigating the Incredible Shrinking Pipeline for Women in Computer Science*, Final Report - NSF Project 9812016, <http://women.acm.org/documents/finalreport.pdf>

Suggested Way forward

How to make Telecentres “Beneficial for Women”

Requirements to ensure women’s access to ICT’s	
1	Conduct Active Outreach
2	Ensure Financial Accessibility
3	Ensure Physical Accessibility
4	Provide Training
5	Ensure Relevance
6	Build Confidence
7	Enable Participation

Jorge, S. (2000), *Gender Perspectives on Telecentres*, ITU, Telecom Americas Telecom Development Symposium Communications: Universal Access and Community Telecenters.

Diversity of Telecentres

■ MSSRF – India

- Telemedicine
- Online discision support system
- Interactive farmers advisory service
- Tele fishery
- Weather services
- Water management

New Strategy:

Creating Women managers



www.mssrf.org

Conroy, c. (2006), *TELECENTRE INITIATIVES IN RURAL INDIA: Failed Fad or the Way Forward?*, Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, UK

Gender Specific Telecentres

- **E –Seva**

- Telecentre run by “Women”
for “Women”

India



- **e Homemakers**

- Homepreneurship Network

Malaysia



www.e sevaonline.com

www.ehomemakers.net

Gender Specific Telecentres

- **Tortas Peru**
 - Housewives confectionary**Peru, Latin America**



- ICT center in Madarrasa,
New Delhi
 - **Babool-Uloom****India**



www.tortasperu.com.pe/ingles/who.php

www.seelampurmart.org

Research Direction

- More **Localized, Cultural specific** considerations are needed for the design
 - *Unique “Human consideration”*
- Relevant **“useful”** , local language, specific services and centres are needed
- More gender focused research: design, and services are needed to examine if Telecentres really make an impact to bridge the “Gender Divide”



Thank You

