

A conceptual image showing a hand holding a small plant with soil, symbolizing growth and development. In the background, a satellite is visible, representing technology and ICT. The entire image is faded and serves as a background for the title.

***Rural Economies and ICT Policies
for Rural Development***

Sustainability of ICT Design Interventions in Agriculture with Poor – The Challenges and Ways Forward (A Case Study Based on the Application of Knowledge Help Extension Technology Initiative (KHETI) in India

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ABSTRACT

The issues of agriculture extension services have been a concern for the agriculture practitioners and research communities for quite some time. Various models have been developed and practiced. These have yielded results yet one of the major concerns with farmers at remote locations is 'getting of timely inputs' for getting better produce. But with the advancement of ICTs and advent of multi-media mobiles phones the agriculture sector in general and extension services in particular have been boosted. Knowledge Help Extension Technology Initiative (KHETI) is a Participatory Designed ICT Solutions developed and experimented by the author with rural poor farmers. The technology in KHETI have five features on members profiles, member land plot details, crop POP profiles, constructing, recording, playing and sending Short Dialogue Strips (SDSs), synchronizing conversation of mobile with server and recording conversation (mobile), transfer of conversation from mobile to server.

In the after math of the project and development of KHETI Technology, claims could be made that designing of ICT solutions for boosting agriculture extension services are very much possible with so called 'less privileged groups' using participatory interaction design methodologies and treating users as co-designers. But the project has highlighted to an important area of procuring and sustenance of ICT design solutions by poor and marginalised. There might be multiple issues in the running and sustenance of such technologies. The socio-economic realities, orientations of the people and their past experiences in availing externally assisted services play major role in it. It is very difficult to propose and develop a business model with such groups.

The proposed paper would deal in details on the issues of making ICT Design Solutions sustainable. In the remedial the paper would also propose a model based on the experiences from the field. Efforts would be made to give possible solutions for ICT policies and practices to complete the loop of bridging the digital divide for the empowerments rural poor.