A Memorandum for Policy Makers

Below are a number of recommended strategies for the use of ICT as a tool in achieving Literacy Decade goals.

Providing Infrastructure:
ICT-based literacy programmes have often suffered from inadequate infrastructure and technical support. The United Nations Decade provides an opportunity for policy makers to set up the required infrastructure, for example, phone lines, reliable electricity supply and internet connectivity.

Formulating a Policy for Integrating ICT in Adult Literacy Programmes:
There is a need to formulate policy that enables the integration of appropriate forms of ICT into literacy programmes. In addition it is necessary to facilitate implementation of cross-cutting, integrated literacy programmes.

Developing Literacy Programmes that are Learner-Centred
Literacy programmes need to be tailored to address the specific needs of targeted groups. ICT can play an important role in raising interest and enthusiasm, and engaging learners, and can be a useful tool in developing learning materials that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. In addition, it is important that literacy programmes not simply focus on teaching skills in reading and writing but provide learners with the ability to access relevant information, which they can use to improve their lives.

Enhancing Professional Development
The professional development of administrators, directors, educators and other literacy personnel is critical for improvement of literacy programmes. As the examples in this booklet show, ICT can be used for distance learning, materials creation, enhancing information retention by trainee teachers, networking and knowledge sharing. There is therefore much that ICT can offer in terms of enhancing and supporting professional development.
Supporting the Creation of a Literacy-Conducive Environment

Community Learning Centres are an effective way of making reading material and ICT accessible to all. Centres such as the Ganokendra in Bangladesh and the Soochanalayas in India are good examples as they do not simply encourage literacy for its own sake but support literacy in terms of the benefits literacy brings for individual and community development. By encouraging the development of locally-relevant skills and by facilitating lifelong learning, these community centres are creating a literacy-conducive environment.

Ensuring Better Planning and Programme Design

It is vital that literacy projects are carefully planned so that they meet the needs of the target group. Planners need to examine how literacy will benefit the target group, and what the learners’ motivations for gaining literacy skills are, i.e. the context in which literacy skills would be used. In addition, factors such as the mother-tongue language and cultural practices must be taken into account when planning the materials and ICT that will be used, and when deciding how the literacy programme will be implemented.

Community participation in this process is vital, as experiences in many countries have shown that literacy projects are more useful and sustainable when communities support and commit to them.

Success of literacy projects also depends on establishing partnerships between stakeholders, so as to draw on the strengths and assets of the various groups. Where appropriate, public-private partnerships can be an effective and affordable way of bringing ICT expertise and experience into educational activities.

Coordination of efforts by the various institutions, ministries and organizations involved will ensure that there is no duplication and wastage of resources. It is important to also ensure that funding is secure and lasts throughout the project.

All literacy projects must have monitoring and evaluation built into the structure so as to determine what works and what does not. Relevant and useful data are vital in order to make decisions regarding improvements to the project.

Beyond Literacy

Being able to read, write and calculate in today’s complex world is often not enough. Developments in technology are changing what it means to be a literate person. As use of ICT grows, it is important for people to also develop the skills required to utilize these technologies effectively and productively. Beyond the traditional skills needed to read and write, information retrieval and management, and critical thinking and problem solving skills are increasingly necessary and must be cultivated by both formal and non-formal education systems.