Respond to emerging development challenge of climate change and environment

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EXPERT VOICE

IT was a remarkable experience being part of the Manthan Award grand jury 2012. I witnessed and got involved in the scrutiny of nominations, their presentations and content and observed the staggering effort and impact they have been able to make on people lives and on ground. It was equally helpful and motivating for me to look at what other people in our region are doing using ICT and development agenda. Moreover, it was inspiring to see the nominees' creativity and innovative solutions to solve the developmental challenges. I am persuaded that the ICT for development has seasoned to the point of being able to derive societal benefits. Kudos to Manthan Award orgainsers for unearthing great creativity and content!

However, I wish to emphasise that there were lesser number of down to earth initiatives in the e-environment category. Obviously then fewer winners! One of the reasons could be that environment is such a broad and cross-cutting area and in development paradigm the scope ranges from agriculture to business to infrastructure. Thereby, in my opinion, some of the applications got embedded in those categories. For instance, new business models and marketing tools providing access to market, including pricing and consumer preferences and other add-on information, where Reuters and Nokia are also behind, got filed under e-business or e-agriculture, which is rightly so, but could also have come under e-environment when we talk about informing farmers to adapt to planting as per changing climate. Similarly, geographic information systems were being used in risk assessments to identify populations and assets under threats by potential natural hazards were elsewhere categorised. Mobile applications through the use of crowd-sourcing have begun to serve as a gateway for so many e-content categories. Likewise, there were ideas where greener power sources for computing devices, which definitely focussed on reducing consumption and promoting the development of more energy-efficient devices, but it was filed under e-infrastructure. Anyway, the point that I want to make is that there is clearly a potential for

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the information and communication technology driven content to play a more crucial role in the arena of environment also. These attempts may have been low or at infancy, but they are expected to rise steadily.

Particularly, as a person passionate about the mountains and environment and as an ICT practitioner, I would like to find ICT creativity and content being able to contribute to address the problem of climate change – 'the defining challenge of our generation'. There is growing evidence about the effects that climate change has, so does the need to better understand and respond to emerging development challenges. ICT creativity and content should be able to contribute to mitigating, monitoring and adaptation to climate change also. Accordingly, Manthan Award may like to consider adding a separate category, like e-climate change to highlight and see ICT-related content and technologies emerge fast and exemplified in the area of climate change as well. I feel such an inclusion will definitely raise awareness about the role of ICT and e-content in addressing the causes and effects of climate change in our region but will also provide a place to showcase innovative examples being undertaken using ICT in the interests of environmental sustainability. This should enhance Manthan Award spirit, social responsibility and also to some extent raise awareness about the problem of our age – climate change.

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