

## Foreword

ICTs have great potential to improve the lives of common people and contribute to accelerating the pace of social development in developing countries. They have proved effective in providing access to information to millions of people even in remote areas, facilitating health care, assisting in distance education and learning, enhancing rural productivity through access to market information, improving service delivery of governments, and empowering grass roots communities by enabling their increased participation in national development efforts.

During the last decade, many governments around the world have formulated national ICT policies and strategies, where ICT is treated as a *thrust sector*. Donors and aid agencies responded by funding a variety of ICT applications for specific sectors or stakeholders, by including ICT components in developing projects, by dealing with telecommunications infrastructure as a free-standing sector, and by carrying out assessments of country-wide e-readiness.

This book aims to improve the understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the ICT revolution and their implications for development policy and strategies. It examines why developing countries should try to adapt and harness ICT in support of economic and social development. It tries to analyze the risk factors of the ICT revolution, and its potential impact on productivity, markets, organizations, and education. It also outlines the rationale for designing national strategies for e-development (or e-enhanced development), objectives, and parameters related to create major thrusts for such strategies in support of economic growth, poverty reduction, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A book featuring all the above aspects can be of immense benefit to the policy initiators, development partners, and researchers in developing substantial national ICT strategies for their economies and make use of their competitive advantages in a global knowledge driven society. Those who understand the inherent processes can direct their efforts towards learning the new practices and may find a route to leaping forward and catching up.

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