Governments and aid agencies now recognize the potential for sustainable economic development from the deployment of information and communication technologies (ICTs) among marginalized and poor populations. Yet such populations have little or no access to such technologies. Deriving sustainable development from the provision of such access requires more than mere technology. The emerging discipline of Community Informatics addresses community-based approaches to development with ICTs. New knowledge is required to understand how development activities can be merged with Community Informatics in a way that is capable of providing sustainable benefits to communities in developing countries. This chapter describes a university-based research initiative that builds on community partnerships that have been fostered in an action research project aimed at deriving tangible benefits for a remote rural community from the use of ICTs.
INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces a university-based initiative for bringing the benefits of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to the marginalized rural populations of the Malaysian state of Sarawak, on the Southeast Asian island of Borneo. Firstly, we will situate contemporary ICTs within the development arena, discussing the potential for sustainable development and significant improvements in well-being that seem to exist from the provision of access to Internet-based information to rural populations in developing countries. This will be followed by a description of an emerging discipline of practice and academic endeavour, known as Community Informatics, that seeks to address the challenges and opportunities that exist for communities to realize their development aspirations through the use of Internet-based resources. We will then proceed to examine the application of Community Informatics to the special case of rural and remote communities in developing countries, arguing that in terms of the digital divide, such communities stand to benefit the most relatively from further diffusion of ICTs throughout the developing world. The discussion is then situated within the particular context of Sarawak, Malaysia. This is followed by a description of the proposal by researchers in a university in Sarawak to focus attention on the pursuit of workable and sustainable solutions to the problems associated with the provision of access to ICTs to remote rural communities through the establishment of a university-community partnership in the form of a research centre. This is based on practical experiences with a research project that has introduced ICTs to a remote rural community. The objectives of the chapter are to describe the formation of a set of partnerships between a university with growing research capacity and relevant experience, with a range of agencies that can synergize with and mobilize that capacity towards the solving of a topical problem. In the example described, the university in Sarawak partners with a development research agency, local private concerns and a government organization to address the problems and opportunities concerned with the application of ICTs to rural development in the Malaysian State of Sarawak.

RURAL ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Governments and aid agencies worldwide are beginning to recognize the potential for sustainable human development from the deployment of ICTs among marginalized and poor populations. However, huge disparities in access exclude the majority of the world's population, those living in the developing countries, from the benefits that ICTs can bring. South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, have only 1.5 telephone lines for every 100 people,
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