

Infopoverty Institute University of Oklahoma

Mission

The mission of the Infopoverty Institute at The University of Oklahoma is to facilitate the use of connectivity to support effective access to and use of information that will improve life conditions in impoverished communities around the world.

Goals

1. Connecting the unconnected world
2. Eradicating poverty and its negative effects through sustainable development

What is Infopoverty?

Just as poverty is defined as the lack of sufficient funds or material possessions necessary to provide the basic necessities (food, clothing, shelter) required to live a healthful life, so infopoverty is the lack of access to basic information that will empower individuals and communities to improve their circumstances. When the lack of connectivity prevents individuals and communities from accessing information necessary to provide safety and a sense of belonging to the world, infopoverty is present.

The Infopoverty Institute at The University of Oklahoma is established to serve as an ongoing program support unit for information, training and technical assistance, and outreach. The Infopoverty Institute coordinates with the Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication (OCCAM) and collaborates with the international community in applying these services especially to impoverished communities around the world. It is further designed to facilitate the implementation and application of resources (human, technological and fiscal) to programs and services delivering high impact results.

The Infopoverty Institute strives to work with OCCAM to provide the leading source for information on trends, best practices, and field application on connectivity and information access that address the issue of infopoverty.

Challenge

The challenge to all world and local leaders is *how*. How can we promote, embrace, and support both the goal of (1) connectivity for the world's population for the purpose of (2) eradicating poverty through sustainable development? For, if we achieve in connectivity and fail in development, we FAIL! While e-learning, e-health, e-commerce, e-government, and e-economic development depend on the e-connections, it also equally depends on *what* information and knowledge is transmitted and *how* that information is provided to facilitate learning, knowledge transferability and applicability. Ultimately success must be measured by the outcomes of sustainable development: Are LIVES changed at the community level? With this in mind, it is important to note that process evaluation assesses the level of connectivity we achieve; outcome evaluation assesses the results and impact on people's lives.

Infopoverty World Conference

The Infopoverty World Conference (IWC) will take place in April, 2007, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City with parallel video sessions in: Milan, Italy; Lima, Peru; Beijing, China; Constantine, Algeria; Navajo Nation, United States; St. Alexandre, Rwanda and other locations. The Infopoverty World Conference is organized by the Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication (OCCAM) in close collaboration with the Infopoverty Institute of the University of Oklahoma, the European Parliament, the UN ICT Task Force and other important institutions. This conference is a premier international symposium on the digital divide that involves more than 100 organizations worldwide. The conference has been held annually since 2001 in more than 20 different venues, including the United Nations Headquarters and the World Bank in Washington.

IWC presenters will illustrate the most powerful strategies of the main international stakeholders engaged in fighting poverty through application of the most recent ICT applications. These applications include new frontiers of research and best practices in telemedicine, e-learning and e-government. We are preparing an innovative project for the UN in collaboration with UNESCO (Department of Information and Communication), ITU (International Telecommunication Union), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN), the Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the World Bank and others.

OCCAM is a United Nations chartered NGO organization, authorized to coordinate the Infopoverty World Conference and all its related activities. OCCAM interacts with highly visible international organizations in many fields related to ICTs, economic development and those engaged in reducing poverty. OCCAM enjoys great visibility throughout the world.

The ICT Village Model Project and Plan of Intervention

The Infopoverty Network created in the framework of the Infopoverty World Conference proposed the establishment of the ICT Village Model as a venue to present the most advanced applications of state-of-the-art technologies and as a model designed to concretely show governments and industries, as well as to the local residents, how the digital revolution help meet the needs of disadvantaged and isolated communities of the world. The working projects in the village models are intended to spur concrete, lasting and sustainable development in the model villages and to inspire similar efforts around the world. It is clear that the simple availability and use of information communication technology is not a goal by itself, but if well used ICTs can be one of the most powerful tools available to assist in reaching the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

The first meeting of interested parties convened on the occasion of PrepCom2 (the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on the Information Society) in Hammamet, Tunisia, on June 15, 2004. Present at that meeting were representatives of important international organizations, including:

ESA – European Space Agency

ITU – International Telecommunication Union

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
UNDESA – United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
The World Bank
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Infopoverty Institute, The University of Oklahoma

The project has been implemented in different phases and is under continuous improvement on the basis of the suggestions received by community member and participating organizations. It is intended to cover the entire progression of development of a remote community, from the delivery of new technology appliances to mass application; broad band services; training for new jobs; delivery of advanced services such as e-learning, telemedicine, e-commerce, e-governance and special applications for the needs of individuals; assistance in the transformation that these new skills and access to information bring forth; and assistance towards new activities able to promote economic, social and cultural development in the village, which will be open to new relations with the “outside” world and progressively and actively tied to it.

Following requests from the United Nations, the project has been included in the activities of the UN Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development in its two pilot countries, Madagascar and the Dominican Republic.

Infopoverty Institute

Created in 2004 within The Oklahoma University to support the Infopoverty Programme in the ambit of academia and to train teachers in the holistic approach necessary to spur development in disadvantages communities, the Infopoverty Institute establishes, initiates, facilitates, and implements sustainable development institutes in the areas of agri-business, e-health, safe water development, energy development, and education. Training programs are conducted in traditional seminar formats as well as interactive online formats. Training sessions are recorded and placed in a video library, available on demand to any connected country or community in the world.

The main areas of application of the Infopoverty Institute are:

- Agribusiness—Fish Farm Development. A Fish Farm Institute was held May, 2007 and again in August, 2007. The full video and materials are available for free downloading from <http://infopoverty.ou.edu>.
- Safe Water. To meet the UN's Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on sustainable safe water development, country leadership must be developed and sustained to implement a strategic policy and program to insure on-going water safety for health purposes and for economic growth.
- E-Health. We must take advantage of Internet connectivity to meet health needs of people. Institutes in several program areas will be conducted and will be made available through the film library available on the Infopoverty Institute web site.
- Clinical Telemedicine Institute. This can be conducted live with clinics in several countries to increase primary health care workers' skills and credentials.

- Pediatric Cardiology Telemedicine. Connectivity to local hospitals will assist in determining treatment for infant heart health.
- Diabetic Retinopathy Telemedicine. This early diagnosis procedure helps prevent progressive blindness by intervening early with treatment.
- Alcohol Abuse Prevention Institute. The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2004 identified this as the primary threat to world health. Consistent with MDGs on sustainable development, the world community must attack this threat. While it is the number one health threat, people can and do recover from alcoholism. Each country must develop and implement priority policy and implement a strategic action agenda to overcome the negative impact of alcoholism on society. This series of institutes, in collaboration with the Christopher D. Smithers Foundation will be targeted at country leaders responsible for policy and program implementation.
- Energy Development Institute. An institute will be held regarding energy development. Energy is a developmental foundation for sustainable development in any country. This institute will examine the local environment and resources as a background for the development of energy policy, program, and energy source, with special attention devoted to alternative energy and renewable energy sources. Efficiency, effectiveness, and cost must be a major focus of strategic development if it is to serve the country best.
- Institute on Sustainable Development. While all OCCAM/Infopoverty Institutes are founded on the principles of sustainable development, this institute is focused on these principles and their implementation in all development areas. Typically, development does not fail due to a lack of content knowledge. Most failure occurs because essential areas of sustainability were compromised. The areas of awareness, communication, involvement, engagement, empowerment, governance, and assessment are often overlooked. Sustainability cannot be realized without them.
- Community Renewal and Environmedia Institute. Created in collaboration with Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal, this institute will include world leaders from countries, communities and disaster areas hit by tsunamis, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Sustainable development must include community development and a new architectural approach which utilizes social technologies in building relationships towards sustainability. Re-building communities without taking into account new standards of communication in relationship with the organization of space would mean not reaping those opportunities.