

The background features a decorative graphic consisting of three sets of concentric blue circles. One set is in the top right, a smaller one is in the middle right, and a large one is in the bottom right. Two thin blue lines originate from the top left and extend diagonally towards the middle right, passing near the circles.

SMART Social Circle - Pilot Project

Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) of Sri Lanka
[Pick the date]

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Abbreviations

| | | |
|--------|---|--------------------------------|
| SSC | - | SMART Social Circle |
| KA | - | Knowledge Agent |
| GA | - | Government Agent |
| AGA | - | Additional Government Agent |
| Ass.GA | - | Assistant Government Agent |
| DS | - | Divisional Secretary |
| ADS | - | Assistant Divisional Secretary |
| GN | - | Grama Niladari |
| GND | - | Grama Niladari Division |

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA) has been mandated by the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) to implement ICT Development activities in the country. ICTA is the single apex body involved in ICT policy and direction for the nation.

Government of Sri Lanka aims to use ICT to foster social integration, peace, economic growth and poverty reduction. A key anticipated outcome is more effective, citizen centered, and transparent government through ICT enabled governance.

The successful ICT enabled projects must be: (a) suitable to the level of a given country's development; (b) relevant to the needs of targeted users; (c) integrated with infrastructure, applications, and skills development; (d) designed and implemented within a broader process of institutional and business process change; (e) coordinated as one part of an overall national development strategy; and (f) continuously monitored and evaluated for feedback.

Finally, project impact is empowering people with practical ICT skills that can be used for their day to day activities and to act as citizen journalists for national development. This will facilitate the development of an environment conducive to the achievement of the nation's intellectual, cultural, and social aspirations through ICT.

Project Overview

Project Vision:

To be the foremost social movement to foster ethical and responsible use of Social Media in and other emerging ICT technologies in citizen journalism, Good governance, Disaster risk management etc.

Project Mission:

Provide the strategic, technological & commercial foundation needed to encourage, promote & develop use all social media activities and application of emerging Information and Communication Technologies and develop an environment conducive to the achievement of the nation's intellectual, cultural and social aspirations through ICT.

Target group:

Members of Community organizations, school children, house wives, Small and Medium scale enterprises, social activists, charitable organizations

Expected Outcome:

Trained Knowledge Agents effectively and increasingly use social media and emerging ICT technologies for promoting citizen journalism, Good governance, and Disaster risk management in societal development

Project Objectives:

- To promote active partnership among citizens to organize, integrate and provide user-friendly on-line information and services
- To build networks among entrepreneurs, administrators, activists, educators, and innovators, who are working to create change through social media
- To establish research and development center for Citizen Journalism
- To link with industry and global knowledge centers
- To produce Citizen Journalists in demand locally and internationally

Above mentioned objectives are expected to be achieved by creating an island-wide network of SMART social circles; with knowledgeable, experienced & responsive staff by using social media and emerging technologies.

Implementation Approach



Due to the nature of project, project team has to go through several steps and high level meetings for successfully implement in ground level. As a result of that; ICTA has communicated with Directors, Secretaries of Ministries and Head of the Departments and have gathered many high level recommendations.

• Step I

As the 1st step of district level implementation, ICTA have individually met 5 District Secretaries of 5 Districts and have presented detailed descriptions. During the above, some suitable GN divisions were selected. The selection criteria included potential, willingness of officers, infrastructure etc. The assumptions made during the selection were the villages have got required resources and the capability to promote via SSC. Hence, the success of the activity totally depends on the content being published in social media continuously.

Kick off Meetings

| District | Date | Participant | Place | Content |
|------------|------------|------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Matara | 16/10/2015 | GA, All DSs,ADA,ASS.GA | District Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Project • Selected suitable DSs and GN Division • Planed next meeting with KAs of selected GN divisions |
| Kurunagala | 28/10/2015 | GA,AGA | District Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Project • Selected suitable DSs and GN Division • Planed next meeting with KAs of selected GN divisions |
| Jaffna | 12/11/2015 | GA, All DSs,ADA,ASS.GA | District Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Project • Selected suitable DSs and GN Division • Planed next meeting with KAs of |

| | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|---|
| | | | | selected GN divisions |
| Badulla | 3/11/2015 | AGA, 3DSs | District Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Project • Selected suitable DSs and GN Division • Planed next meeting with KAs of selected GN divisions |
| Polonnaruwa | 4/11/2015 | GA,AGA | District Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Project • Selected suitable DSs and GN Division • Planed next meeting with KAs of selected GN divisions |

- **2nd Step**

Following the above, ICTA intended to make the ground level KAs aware of the whole picture of the project including all aspects and organized 5 district level meetings for KAs under the chairmanship of District Secretaries who are the administrative heads who could recommend the KAs.

| District | Date | Place | Participant | Content |
|-------------|------------|----------------------|---|--|
| Matara | 5/11/2015 | District Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADS • Gov. Officers from 12GN | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training for KAs 2. Discuss with GSs 3. Recognized Burning Issues |
| Polonnaruwa | 23/11/2015 | District Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADS • Gov. Officers from 12GN • Community Leaders | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training for KAs 2. Discuss with GSs 3. Recognized Burning Issues |
| Badulla | 9/11/2015 | District Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADS • Gov. Officers from 12GN • Community Leaders | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training for KAs 2. Discuss with GSs 3. Recognized Burning Issues |
| Jaffna | 1/12/2015 | District Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADS • Gov. Officers from 12GN • Community Leaders | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training for KAs 2. Discuss with GSs 3. Recognized Burning Issues |
| Kurunagala | 10/12/2015 | District Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADS • Gov. Officers from 12GN • Community Leaders | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training for KAs 2. Discuss with GSs 3. Recognized Burning Issues |

As another significant step, a one day training program was organized for appointed KAs in their relevant districts. This has been an opportunity for the KAs to learn a lot about computer and internet usage such as email, social media and trading platforms and etc. The training sessions were undertaken by the Institute of Copacetic under the direct supervision of ICTA. The KAs were provided with learning materials and posters at the session.

Summary Of Training

| District | Status | Training Allocated | Training Completed |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Matara | Organizing SSC launch | 120 | 87/100 |
| Badulla | KN Training | 120 | 38/40 |
| Polonnaruwa | KN Training | 120 | 44/60 |
| Kurunagala | Training Scheduled | 120 | 16/20 |
| Jaffna | KN Training | 120 | 79/80 |

Lessons, Observations and Challenges

During the project implementation period ICTA had several discussions with people from various backgrounds from all over the country and the project team also has consulted them before implementing various activities at field level. This has been a good opportunity to recognize the resources and challenges at the field level. Also the strengths and weaknesses of the government officers who work with villagers and community leaders were recognized during the implementation. As the key target of implementation was to empower rural communities, the following criteria were considered as important.

1. Exclusive Resources of Villages – Ex
2. Talented People
3. Commercially useful environment
4. Difficulties faced by people
5. Less computer literacy
6. Natural disaster
7. Scarcity of Resources
8. Willingness of people
9. Infrastructure difficulties for conducting program

Way forward

As a continuation of conducting such district level training programs, ICTA plans to launch separate SSCs for all the villages. This is considered as an important step for the sustainability of the project. Through replication of such activity in several other villages, community members will obtain an opportunity to organize, perform and get benefitted through SSC.

Apart from the plans and activities implemented through ICTA and the project team, several district level forums are also planning to hold such similar initiatives and grab the awareness of the community.

Throughout the implementation of this activity, ICTA team has observed many opportunities and challenges which could be taken forward as lessons learned.