CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present study attempts to probe into the impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) among the urban youth of Mizoram from a social work perspective. The purpose of the study is to explore how ICT is changing the life of youth in general and the repercussion ICT has especially for young people’s development.

In contemporary society, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is necessary in people’s daily life and it is vital for human development. It has been recognized as a tool at the center of human existence (Feng 2012). We are now said to be living in an information age; an era where information is the basis for development in whatever capacity. Young people are often the leading innovators in the use and spread of information and communications technologies. They adapt quickly and are generally quite eager for the great quantities of information, locally and globally, that can be provided through emerging information and communication technologies. According to Ishii and Wu (2005), the new communication technologies, especially the Internet and mobile phones, constitute the essential components of the youth culture.

Communication is a keystone in social life. During the last few decades, peoples’ ways of communication and interaction have developed and changed tremendously with the development of the digital ICT (Söderström, 2009). To understand the significance ICT holds for young people it is important to look into how ICT is mediated through existing social relationships, how it is incorporated in real-life relationships and how ICT has become a crucial factor in the social construction of young people’s peer group cultures (Buckingham 2006).
Dijk (2006) argue that information is a crucial resource for good decision-making and it can determine the extent to which a person can have access to different kinds of services, goods and markets. It is a source of opportunities and thus difficulty in accessing information or the lack of possibilities to access it is a source of inequality in different spheres of human development. Information is now considered a primary good that is essential for the survival and self-respect of individuals (In Blake and Quiros, 2010).

In the present information-based society, technology has become an increasingly prevalent part of modern life. It provides us with a range of options that enrich our lives and increase our efficiency. (Umrani and Ghadially, 2008). In some parts of the world, information and communication technologies and services (ICTs) are contributing to revolutionary changes in business and everyday life. In other parts of the world, the lives of people have hardly been touched by these innovations. If people in developing countries are unable to acquire the capabilities for using the new ICT applications, they will be increasingly disadvantaged or excluded from participating in the global information society. The social and economic potential of these new technologies for development is enormous, but so too are the risks of exclusion. (Mansell, 1999).

Technologies affect youth behaviour or life in several ways. This might be in relation to their cognitive development, social development and physical and psychological development as well as the potential effects on their education. ICT plays a pivotal role in shaping the behaviour and/or attitude of youth either in a positive or negative manner.
David (2007) argue that young people are struggling to find direction in their lives, earn their livelihood and develop their identities in a complex situation, where ICTs are playing a central role in society and especially among the youth.

While the body of research on young people’s use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is quite comprehensive, research addressing digital differentiation in young people’s use of ICT is still in its early days. This might be due to a common notion that young people are the web generation and online experts. Yet there is a concern that increasing internet penetration will exacerbate digital inequalities among young people and that exclusion from digital networks will be one of the most damaging exclusions, especially for vulnerable and marginalized subgroups of young people (Livingstone and Helsper, 2007).

The youth of today, due to the strong influence of technology in their everyday lives, are constantly confronted with the problem of self-definition (Kroger, 1989). To most adolescents, gadgets such as mobile phones are effective tools in the production of individuality and personhood (Aakhus and Katz, 2002). Cell phones not only make a statement about a youth’s identity in terms of class but also about how the youth want to be viewed externally. From both the inner and outer identity, technology is used increasingly within youth culture to project a desirable image to others; to express social status and to make visible personal characteristics to create an identity (Aakhus and Katz, 2002). Youth increasingly believe that the possession of ICT gadgets help them preserve, express and confirm pre-existing social links, become culturally more broad minded and educationally more knowledgeable through exchange of the latest information in every domain of life and the day-today experiences (Jain, 2008).
According to Rahim (2009) young people are the world's largest resource in development. Forty percent of the world's population is under 20 years of age and over 1 billion people are between the ages of 15 and 25. In some developing countries, youth constitute more than two thirds of the population. The World Summit on the Information Society in 2003 acknowledged that young people are the future workforce, leading creators and early adopters of ICT, and that they must be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers.

Gigler (2004) states that “similarly to literacy, newly acquired ‘informational capabilities’ can act as an agent for change for individuals and communities enhancing their abilities to engage with the formal institutions in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres of their life” (In Yukhymenko and Brown, 2008).

Odogwu and Nyala (2010) cited that ‘Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become key tools and have had revolutionary impacts on how we see the world and how we live in it’. ICT not only offers opportunities for young people to get information, to learn, but also provides opportunities for youth to develop skills and to get a job (Feng 2012).

1.1. ICT and Human Development

Exploring existing development approaches is useful to explicate the role of ICT in development. There are varieties of human development approaches. Some address a specific aspect of human development, e.g. human rights, gender, and poverty. Others come with a broader agenda (In Zheng, 2007).

Clearly, how human development is defined today is very much influenced by Amartya Sen’s views. According to the UNDP (2001), “human development is about much more than the rise or fall of national incomes. It is about creating an
environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about much more than economic growth, which is only a means - if a very important one - of enlarging people’s choices.” Sengupta (2000) elaborates on this by saying that “if improvement of people’s well-being is the objective of development, then economic growth….would not be an ends in itself. It can be one of the ends, and it can also be a means to some other ends, when ‘well-being’ is equivalent to the realization of human rights” (In Alampay, 2006).

According to the human development report (HDR, 1990) ‘Human development is a process of enlarging people’s choices. The most critical of these wide range choices are to live a long and healthy life; to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights, and personal self-respect’. The approach has two sides of which must be balanced; first is the formation of capabilities – such as improved health care, knowledge and skills – and second is the use people make of their acquired capabilities – for leisure, productive purpose or being active in social, cultural and political affairs (HDR, 1990).

The human development approach as developed by Amartya Sen argues that development is the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy to lead the lives they have reason to value (Sen, 1999).

The notion of development is a problematic one, and its debate has centered around three main discourses namely: Modernisation, Dependency and Human development (Sein & Harindranath, 2004). Another approach to development is the alternative approach also known as human development. This approach departs from
the generally accepted economist perspective (Modernist and Dependency) to people-centred development. It’s a more appropriate conceptualisation of development (Sein & Harindranath, 2004) and a resonance of Amartya Sen’s work, which sees development to be concerned with human well-being and freedom. The focus of this perspective is building capabilities (Prakash & De, 2007) and creating societies where the potentials of individuals can be realised (Sein & Harindranath, 2004). This perspective of development is seen from the local level, that is, development is about reducing poverty, increasing educational and health levels, building a society marked by involvement, participation, transparency and better management of behaviour and custom based on better understanding of culture (Soeftestad & Sein, 2003).

Society has to move beyond techno-economic measure and understanding of ICT and development (Audenhove 2000), and beyond access, and focus instead on people and how they use ICTs (Norrish 1998, Soeftestad & Sein 2003). Mansell (2002) this is why some authors believe thatSen’s capability approach is useful for understanding people’s use of ICTs for development (In Alampay, 2006)

To understand the role that ICTs play in human development, first there is a need to understand the requirements and circumstances of the people who are to benefit from the introduction of ICTs. At the same time, the ways in which ICTs can help people address and meet these needs must be understood (Labelle, 2005). Information and knowledge are regarded as the new ‘factor of production’, playing as critical role in human development as the traditional factors of production – land, labour, and capital (World Bank, 1998/99). The view that information is very central to the solution of any society’s economic and social problems is now widely accepted (Belshaw, 1965, McAnany, 1978). Pradervand (1980) has gone even further, insisting that information is the most basic of all human needs. ICTs will become crucially
important for sustainable development in developing countries (Credé and Mansell, 1998).

Technologies affect youth behaviour or life in several ways. This might be in relation to their cognitive development, social development and physical and psychological development as well as the potential effects on their education. ICT plays a pivotal role in shaping the behaviour and/or attitude of youth either in a positive or negative manner.

Youth are increasingly using information and communication technologies (ICTs), as these technologies are now widespread in the home, school, colleges and community. Youngsters are using computer, internet and mobile phones in order to be informed, educated and entertained.

According to Yukhymenko and Brown (2008), it is imperative to study how ICT is being used, what kinds of practices and access people are experiencing, what they use it for, how it serves as a tool for the development of individuals and, more broadly, countries. ICTD research is based on the belief that ICT has, potentially, the capacity to contribute towards the improvement of various aspects of life, from alleviating poverty to strengthening the democratic polity (Avgerou, 2012).

ICTs are tools or techniques that allow recording, storing, using, diffusing and accessing electronic information (World Bank, 2002). ICTs are “tools that facilitate communication and the processing and transmission of information and the sharing of knowledge by electronic means” (UNDESA-GAID, 2009).

ICTs and particularly the internet are widely regarded as groundbreaking inventions that have changed the way millions of people live their lives, and yet researchers and practitioners in the field of ICT and development often struggle to prove specific impacts of the technology (Dorothea Kleine, 2009).
Maitland (1984) stated that there has been a concern within the development community as to the rapidly growing use of ICT and its relevance to development since the early 1980s when the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) undertook the first major research project on some of their linkages. The conclusions of this first major study were that ICTs and the networks linking them needed to be strengthened across the world in order to share the benefits that these technologies bring to “health and other social services, administration and commerce, but also in stimulating economic growth and enhancing the quality of life” (In Hamel, 2010).

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) convened by the United Nations in 2003 and 2005 served to solidify opinions amongst government and development practitioners on the potential impacts of ICTs and their role in development (WSIS, 2005). Seen as able to deliver on both human development concerns for participation and empowerment, as well being significant to the Millennium Development Goals, ICTs are advocated to play an important role as enablers of development (UN, 2000; Rezaian, 2006). It can be summarized as the use of ICTs to reach development objectives but their potential impact lie in the uniqueness of these new tools, such as mobile phones and the World Wide Web, which have revolutionized the ease with which people are able to exchange and share information across vast distances (In Hamel, 2010).

Any technology will be insufficient if people do not understand how to put it to effective use as part of their lives or their work, either because they are not trained to use it, or they cannot imagine the possibilities for how they could use it. People will be encouraged to use ICT only when it is apparent to them that it will have a positive impact on their daily lives.

1 http://www.bridges.org
Any kind of technology can be understood as a tool or technique for extending human capacity. In this sense, ICTs extend our human capacity to perceive, understand and communicate. The mobile phone enables us to speak from wherever we are to others thousands of kilometers away; television permits us to see what is happening on the other side of the planet almost as it happens; and the Web supports immediate access to, and exchange of, information, opinions and shared interests (Roy et al., 2011).

It is in this light that this research seeks to explore the value of human development in the discourse of ICT and development. The present study is based on the concept of human development (HDR, 1990) and a capability approach to the introductions of ICTs (Zheng, 2009; Sen, 1999).

1.2. ICT in Mizoram

The entire territory of Mizoram is mostly mountainous and hilly with precipitous slopes forming deep gorges culminating into several streams and rivers. Due to these factors, digital divide may be more pronounced in Mizoram. Yet at the same time, access to ICT is a way to overcome issues of geographic and social isolation (Willis, 2006).

The importance of being connected is becoming more and more central to the everyday lives of a growing percent of the world’s population. As the new information and communication technologies overcome the barriers of distance and time; perhaps, in Mizoram accessibility of information and knowledge have been improved.

The Department of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been established in the year 2008 for framing policy, planning, implementation and monitoring of Information & Communication Technology and e-Governance projects.
The Department has a vision to use Information & Communication technology to make available information and government services related to basic needs of common persons accessible to them near their locality throughout their lives through minimum procedural formalities thereby pursuing economic development.²

Mizoram recognizes Information Technology (IT) as the fastest and the most advanced vehicle of change for all-round progress and development of the State. In view of the potential of Information Technology (IT), the State Government advocates widespread proliferation of Information Technology (IT) in the State and adopts policy support for promotion of Information Technology (IT) in the fields of E-Governance, Empowerment of the people and the society, Education, Industry, Health, Rural Development, Agriculture, Tourism, IT for Masses, and IT Enabled Services.

Garbyal (2012) Principal Secretary to the Government of Mizoram said that, the vision of the IT department in the state of Mizoram is to create a world class environment where major ICT companies can conduct their business and generate employment. Mizoram has one of the highest literacy rates in the country. The state has a huge potential in IT and ITES sector. But there are also the challenges. The most major challenge is the state’s geographical distance from the major industrial hubs in the country. Recently an MOU was signed between Department of Electronics and IT, Government of India, and Mizoram University to setup Software Technology Park in the University campus. He was confident that this will lead to a boost to the IT

² http://dict.mizoram.gov.in/ (access on dt. 3.2.2013, 11:37 PM)
industry in the state in the fields of software development, software exports and ITES³.

The Mizoram State e-Governance Society has introduced Information and Communication technology (ICT) enabled education through an initiative termed as “Creation of Education Technology Infrastructure in 50 Government Girl’s middle Schools of Mizoram.” This project aims to spread application of ICT in Classroom transactions leading to quality improvement of school education. The project has been implemented in 50 Government Girl’s middle schools of the state. Even the teachers were trained in application of ICT in Education. The project also includes 1-year support service to each school involved for facilitating project implementation and maintenance.

For youth in mountainous regions like Mizoram, the challenge is pronounced as many of the profound changes in technology reach the mountainous areas last. However, while ICT clearly has the potential to empower young people and improve their lives in many respects; questions remain regarding its role in deepening existing inequalities and divisions in the world (UN 2004). Without incorporating an emerging technologies and widespread use of ICT in remote areas such as mountainous regions, important voices will be left out of this global network (Willis, 2006).

Mountain regions in developing countries are among the poorest, most-remote and most-excluded in the world. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) bring with them a promise of addressing poverty, remoteness, exclusion and other

³ http://egov.eletsonline.com/2012/07/mizoram-has-huge-potential-in-it-and-ites-sectors/ (access on dt.2.7.2012, 10:20PM)
developmental problems. Yet, to date, little has been written about the application of ICTs in mountain regions (Heeks and Kanashiro, 2009).

1.3. **An Overview of Concepts**

*Youth:* Youth means the time between childhood and adulthood. It often indicated based on the chronological age of a person. Youth is the period of life between childhood and adulthood. It is the state or quality of being young, especially of being vigorous and lively. The planning commission of India (2002) refers to the term youth as the age group between 15 and 34 years.

Though the definitions and age bar of youth differ from country to country, in Mizoram by and large the population in the age group between 14 to 40 years is termed as youth<sup>4</sup>.

*Development:* The formal definition of human development presented in the human development report (HDR, 1990) is as follows: Human development is a process of enlarging people’s choices. The most critical of these wide range choices are to live a long and healthy life; to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights, and personal self-respect (In Dasuki, 2010).

Development in the present study is not only the rise in income but it is what the technological advancement enables one to do, the opportunities it provides for the youth to meet their personal goals and values.

*Capability Approach:* The word “capability” as used by Sen differs from its everyday sense, which usually refers to trained potentials, including skills, abilities, and aptitudes. Rather, “capability” in this approach reflects the real opportunities

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<sup>4</sup> YMA and KTP which is the largest youth organization in Mizoram define youth as the age group between 14 – 40 years.
(environmental opportunities and individual abilities) that a person has to lead a life that s/he values (Gasper, 2007).

Robeyns, (2005) stated that Sen’s CA is a normative frame-work for evaluating human development (that views human development as the “process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” The CA is concerned with an individual’s real opportunities in achieving his or her “well-being freedom” and “agency freedom” (Sen, 1992).

**Information and Communication Technology (ICT):** Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a term that describes any technology that helps to produce, manipulate, store, communicate, and/or disseminate information including: media that transmit and present information including voice, data and images through television, radio, internet, satellites and mobile phones. In the present study ICT refers to computer, internet and mobile phones. ICTs are a tools or techniques that allow recording, storing, using, diffusing and accessing electronic information (World Bank, 2002). ICTs are “tools that facilitate communication and the processing and transmission of information and the sharing of knowledge by electronic means” (UNDESA-GAID, 2009).

**Digital Divide:** Digital divide refers to the difference in access to information through computers and the internet or other information technologies. More generally, digital divide is the gap between information and communications technology (ICT) “haves” and “have-nots” or inequalities in ICT access and use. The digital divide refers to “situations in which there is a marked gap in access to or use of ICT devices” (Campbell 2001). As a concept, the digital divide is "a broad allusion to the skewed
distribution in the production, access, and consumption of ICTs as mechanisms for social and economic development between and within countries” (Isaacs, 2006).

**Quality of Life (QoL):** The study adopts three QoL dimensions from F.N. Kivunike et al, (2011) which was synthesized from Sen’s propositions of five instrumental freedoms; these are social opportunities, economic facilities and political freedoms. Social opportunities refer to arrangement society makes available to enable an individual to live a better life; economic facilities refer to the opportunities that individuals enjoy to utilize resources for the purpose of consumption, production or exchange. Political freedoms refer to opportunities people have to exercise their political rights (Sen, 2000). The social opportunities dimension consists of personal development, physical, social and emotional well being; the economic facilities dimension caters for material well-being, while the political freedoms dimension cater for people’s rights and security.

1.4. **Statement of the Problem**

Proliferation of communication technology in Mizoram has opened new opportunities for the youth and these technologies have major advantages but at the same time, it has dangerous disadvantages too. The question now is, do young people in Mizoram make effective use of ICT? Research on the impact of ICT on users in Mizoram is not well documented. It is therefore necessary to find out whether the digital opportunities are mostly used for developmental activities or for entertainment purposed. The growing importance of ICT in daily life prompts the need to consider the role of ICT more explicitly in urban areas.

The purpose of the study is to explore how ICT is changing tribal youth’s life in Mizoram in general and which repercussions ICT has especially for young people’s development. The study also assesses the digital divide (core and peripheral) between
youth in core areas and youth in peripheral areas. It further identifies the positive and negative influence of ICT among the youth. The study also explores the different patterns of usage between student youth and non student youth as well as male and female youth; and to find out significant differences between gender and socioeconomic background and educational level of ICT users. The results of these findings will also help the government to identify the effects of ICTs on youths’ education, employment and other areas in order to formulate policies that will help the youth and social work practice for urban youth development.

1.5. **General Objectives**

i. To assess the use of ICT on development of urban youth in Mizoram.

*Specific Objectives:*

i. To enumerate and identify the socio-economic factors associated with the use of ICT among urban youth of Aizawl.

ii. To find out the level of accessibility of ICTs among urban youth (male and female).

iii. To probe into types of ICTs used by urban youth (male and female).

iv. To find out the pattern and purpose of ICT used among the urban youth (male and female).

v. To assess the digital divide as well as gender gap in ICTs usage.

vi. To offer suggestions to policy makers.
1.6. **Chapter Scheme**

The present study is organised into the following chapters.

1) Chapter I : Introduction
2) Chapter II : Review of Literature and Theoretical Approach
3) Chapter III : Research Methodology
4) Chapter IV : Profile of the Respondents
5) Chapter V : ICT Usage by Youth
6) Chapter VI : Impact of ICT
7) Chapter VII : ICT and Youth Quality of Life
8) Chapter VIII : Dynamics of ICT Use Among Urban Youth: Focus Group Discussion
9) Chapter IX : Major Findings and Conclusion