

Capacity Building in the Commonwealth

Investing in People

By Marcel Belingue, Head of Membership and Communications

Within the people–processes–technology change trichotomy, failure is too often rooted in inadequate provisions for the ‘people’ dimension. If developing countries are to truly benefit from advances in information and communication technologies (ICT), governments and industry must continue to provide, increase or stimulate the right levels of investment in developing adequate levels of human resources with the skills needed to successfully develop, adopt, or deploy new communication technologies.

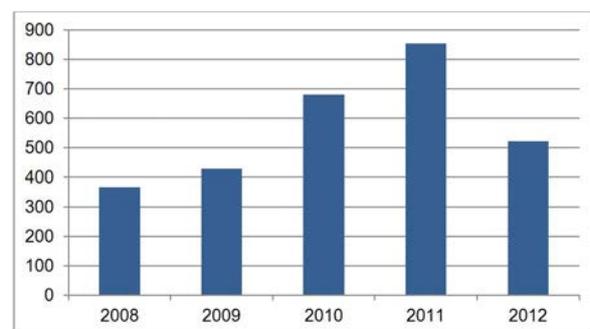
The knowledge economy is a reality, and in many respects, investing in people represents developing countries’ best bet to secure their place in the global digital economy. This requirement goes beyond investing in technology skills. If countries such as Singapore or India are obvious examples of success stories in continuous and systematic policies in support of ICT skills development, less noticeable and yet burgeoning results are being achieved in other countries, such as Rwanda, where similarly ambitious policy commitments to ICT skills development exist. However, in most cases, collaborative efforts are required.

Like other international and regional organisations, the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) assists its member countries in developing the skilled workforce needed to mainstream ICTs in their economy. Over the past five years, it has committed a total of £4.9 million in capacity development programmes in ICT policy development and regulation, technology, and management programmes in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia-Pacific. Its main capacity development programme, the Programme for Development and Training (PDT), provides a unique pooled procurement framework for skills development, which public and private sector organisations can join, allowing them to rapidly source needed expertise from other parts of the world.

The CTO is mindful of the need to ensure equal access and opportunities for all peoples of the Commonwealth and beyond. Focusing its efforts on areas such as skills

development, the youth, or ICTs for the disable, and working in partnership with other organisations, the CTO aims to develop and share guidance on good practices in the use of ICTs for education, especially for skills development and entrepreneurship.

Number of ICT professionals who benefitted from CTO programmes



Stakes are not limited to the adoption of ICTs and their impact on the economic and social development of these countries. Other considerations matter, such as cybersecurity which is a pressing concern for all, and providing secure digital economic environments will require considerable collaboration and transformation for many countries and organisations. Hence the need to invest in identifying and responding to persisting or anticipated skills gaps in specific areas, such as cybersecurity, regulatory environments, or broadband access.

As a platform for collaboration between various stakeholders which include ICT ministries, regulators, operators, manufacturers, the CTO’s PDT represents a unique and agile resource for specialist training aimed at working professionals and, more importantly, a worthy investment for its participating members.