

Finding a Voice

- Aim to explore how technological change might be socially effective and culturally empowering
- Funded by Australian Research Council Linkage grant and UNESCO and UNDP
- Sites: India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Indonesia
- Established a network of 15 (pre-existing) ICT centres
 - telecentres
 - community radio / video
 - community libraries
 - Community multimedia centres

Finding a Voice : 2 main activities and outcomes

- Participatory local content creation – a variety of content creation activities and a transferable set of principles and processes

- Ethnographic Action Research (EAR) – a research and development methodology for improving the effectiveness of community-based media and ICT centres

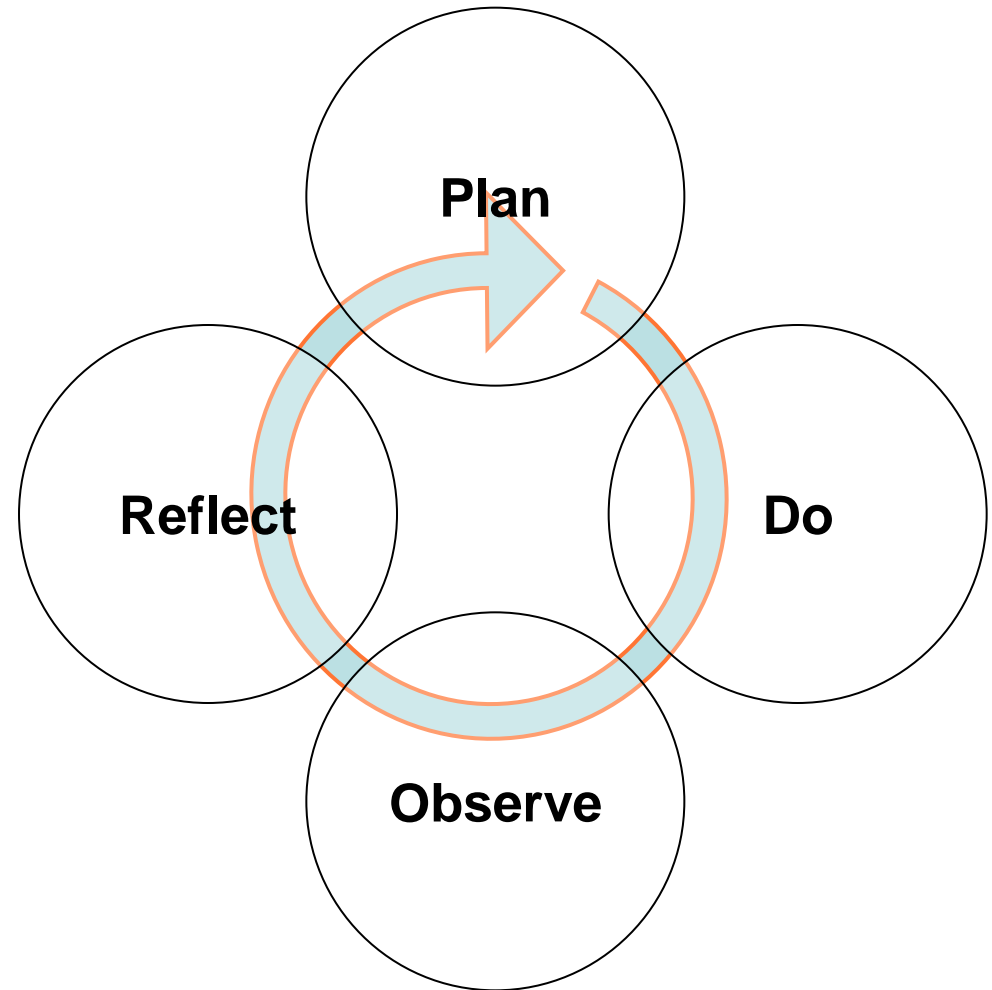
EAR: Ethnographic Action Research

Combines three research approaches

1. **ETHNOGRAPHY**: traditionally used to understand different cultures in detail. It is long term and requires researcher to be embedded in local cultures.
2. **PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES** help both researchers and participants understand complex issues in an inclusive and participatory manner.
3. **ACTION RESEARCH** used to bring about new activities through new understandings of situations.

EAR: key features

- Embedded
- Ongoing
- Social mobilisation
- Research culture
- Participatory
- Action research cycle



Ethnographic Action Research is a methodology that combines research with project development. It has been designed for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) initiatives.

This handbook is designed to train EAR researchers to continually develop and deepen their understandings of communication in local contexts.



A well trained EAR researcher will share this knowledge with colleagues to develop the ICT initiative's programme accordingly. A well trained EAR researcher will ensure that there are high levels of participation in both research activities and the programmes of the ICT initiative.

[Begin EAR training](#) →

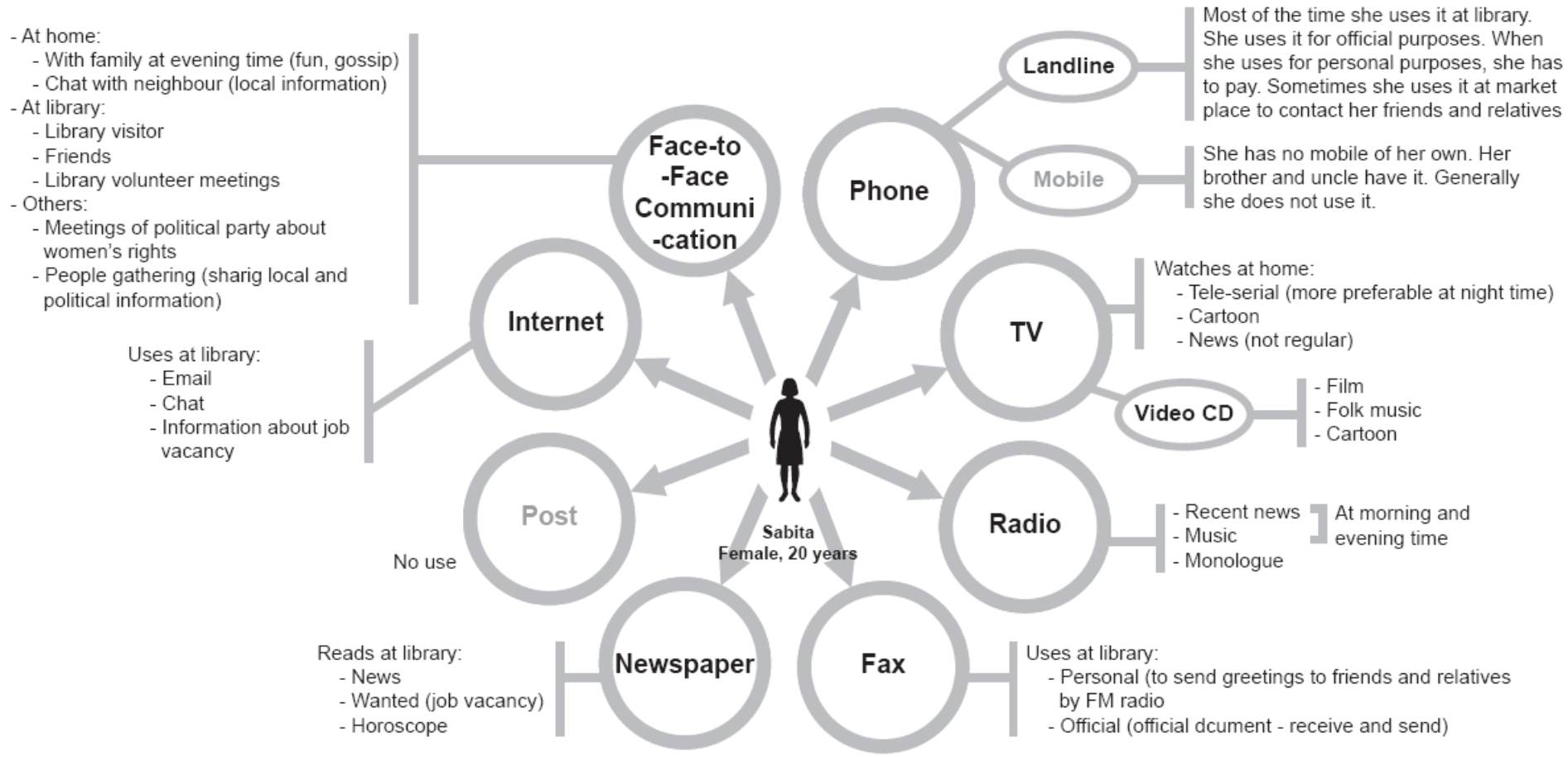


Communicative ecologies

- Reflects 'ethnographic' goal of holism, importance of context
- Tool for mapping participation in communication – ground it in the everyday
- Assumes ICT joins pre-existing communication systems beyond mass / community media
- Transport infrastructure
 - roads, buses, trains
- Social communication practices
 - public and private gossip
- Local people often do not use or think about an individual medium in isolation from other media
- Communication takes place within an existing 'communicative ecology' specific to each community/group/place... culture

Communicative Ecology of Sabita

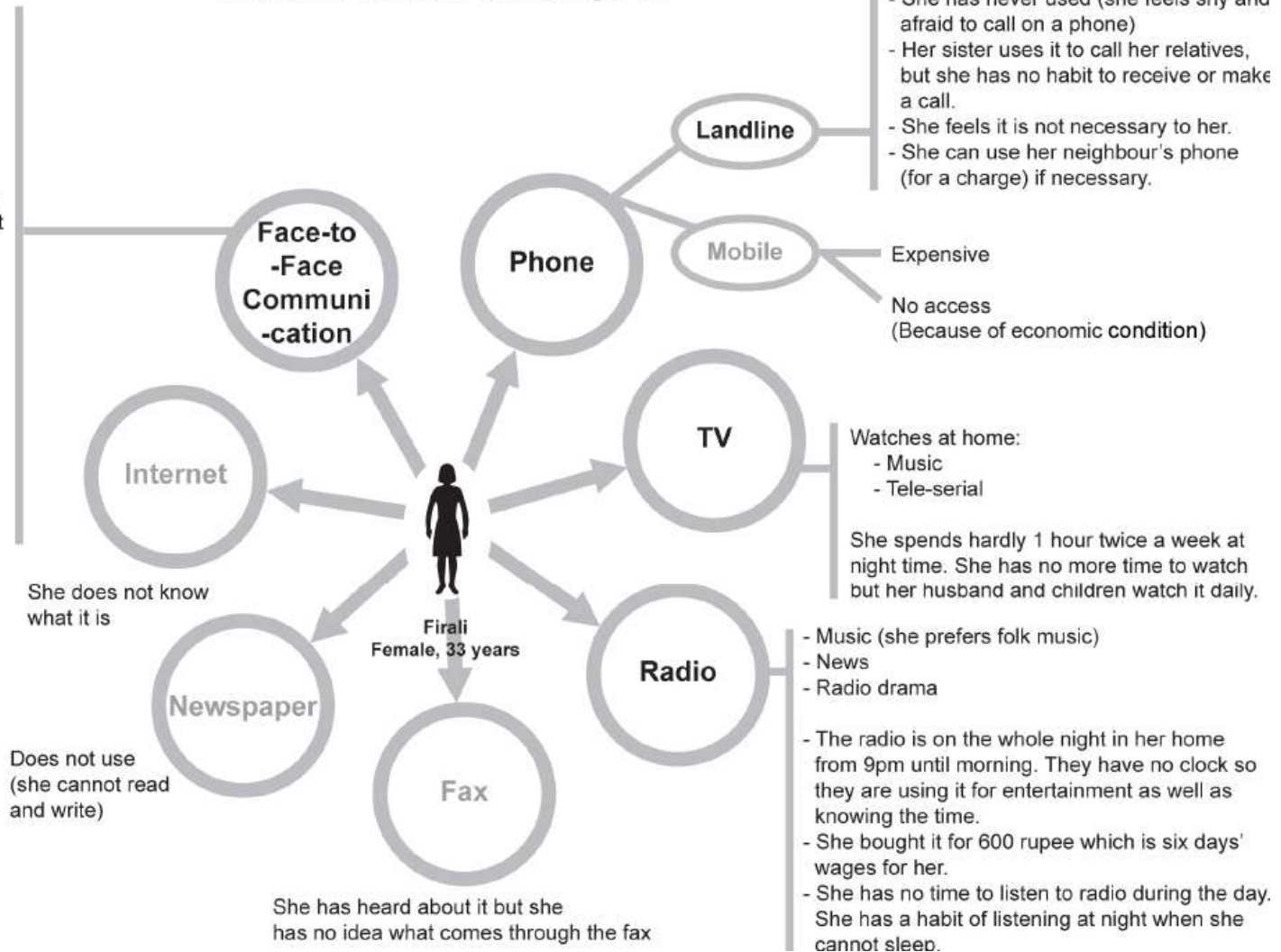
Place: Jhuwani Community Library Date: 25th Feb 2007 Time: 1.00pm to 2.00pm
 Library Voluteer, Female, Age: 20



Communicative Ecology of Firali

Place: Jhuwani Date: 24th Mar 2007 Time: 5.00pm to 6.00pm
Household woman, Female, Age: 33

- Chat with friends:
 - On cutting grass (for their cattle)
 - On cattle grazing
 - On working in the fields
 - ⇒ Share sadness and happiness
- Saving group meetings:
 - She is a member of 2 local saving and credit groups. They meet once a month. They discuss and exchange ideas about different development programmes, opportunities, farming systems, health problems etc
- Religious/cultural meeting:
 - She is a participant of her local level cultural group (indigenous folk music and dance)
- Community gathering:
 - Sometimes she gets involved in community gatherings organised by local NGOs who support the saving group formation/running



Finding a Voice: Some Main Research Findings

- The importance of context: understanding situations from the perspectives of local people
- Participation in Communication: participatory content creation can provide mechanism for participatory development – not about delivering a message but about generating debate
- Local content: if dialogue is essential to human development, this places communication at the centre of development – horizontal communication
- Building capacities: it is important to work with people to develop their own solutions and formats – EAR and participatory content creation strategies

PCC: some principles

- Encourage in-depth community discussions
 - Around content creation themes and distribution strategies
- Targeting the excluded
 - Experiment with multiplatform distribution and narrowcasting
- Mixing media
 - Combine and leverage new and traditional technologies
- Sustainability through creative engagement
 - New ways to integrate ICT interventions with communities

- www.findingavoice.org
- www.ear.findingavoice.org

2 UNESCO publications:

- *Participatory Content Creation for Development: Principles and Practices*
- *Finding a Voice: Themes and Discussions*

Hearn, G., Tacchi, J., Foth, M., & Lennie, J. (2009). *Action Research and New Media: Concepts, Methods and Cases*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.