

ICT Innovation for Quality of Life and Healthy Aging

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"The term *quality of life* is used to evaluate the general well-being of individuals and societies. The term is used in a wide range of contexts, including the fields of international development, healthcare, and politics. Quality of life should not be confused with the concept of standard of living, which is based primarily on income. Instead, standard indicators of the quality of life include not only wealth and employment, but also the built environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, and social belonging."

Interesting fact: this is the definition anyone can find if digits "quality of life" in Google search! Not that we need to check Wikipedia to understand the concept, of course, but what an extraordinary development we had in ICTs can only be appreciated and assessed if we compare what expectations we nurtured before their introduction and what real achievements we can now enjoy.

I will not bother you with examples of thousands of technological applications that make our life, especially the older sector of population's life, easier and safer. Experts can and well outline the myriad of possibilities in the upcoming panel discussions. What I do want to share instead are my observations surrounding the almost exponential growth in knowledge that we are experiencing. Indeed, it is becoming increasing broader as we uncover more and more wonders which make up our natural world and its building blocks. And as a society our individuals are becoming increasingly narrow in their understandings.

ICT has the ability to connect us all, to allow us to understand the vast interconnected networks which bind us and to enjoy what it means to be part of a society. To connect people across the other side of the world for business or for social purposes means that we can feel and come together as one in the face of adversity. From the happiness seen during the recent democratic uprisings in the Middle East, to the sadness we all shared during the Japanese Tsunami our quality of life no longer depends solely upon generating income, but sharing those moments which help use to realise our humanity.

Engaging in the world around us, I believe is the most essential part to 'healthy aging'. ICT allows us to grow old with dignity, to be active members of our communities and, to be one click away with programs like Skype, from those we love. In short, it empowers those to feel strong when they are at their weakest, and for that we can all be grateful. Well... as long as we can all remember our passwords.

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