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Information and Communication Policy Formulation and the Information Divide in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

In 2005 the government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) adopted an Information Communication and Technology (ICT) policy whose objective was to spearhead social change by among other things reducing information gaps between the rich and the poor. To date there is little evidence to show that the policy has achieved any of its objectives. Many among the citizens are still unaware of its existence. The gap between the “information haves” and the “information have nots” is forever yawning and the so-called universal access of communication technologies appears to be an illusion. This paper seeks to assess achievements of the government of Zimbabwe in the implementation of its ICT policy in order to ascertain its successes, failures, and challenges. In particular, the paper seeks to examine the character of “information divides” which exist in Zimbabwean society in order to understand how these divides militate against the attainment of economic development. The study utilizes literature reviews, participant observation and document analysis in order to glean insights on the nature and character of the information divide in Zimbabwe. Preliminary findings are that a top-down policy formulation process, the economic and lack of awareness have resulted in this policy failing to achieve some of its objectives. As a consequence Zimbabwean is

characterized by deep information divides along gender, class, age, geography and physical abilities.

Keywords: Information divide, "information haves", "Information have nots", policy formulation

Introduction

Information has always been a crucial component of society from stone-age to the computer age. The uninterrupted flow of information enables social interactions, business, education, health, mass media, and international relations to function smoothly. Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) which encompasses the use of computers, telecommunications, office systems and technologies for collection, processing, storing, packaging and dissemination of information have become an integral component of developmental agendas of modern states. The role of ICTs in development is widely acknowledged by many scholars (Harindranath and Sein, 2007, Wilson and Heeks, (2000), Adamolekun, (1996), Esipisu and Kariithi, (2008). For instance, Adamolekun (1996) argues that ICTs or the 'information superhighway' which is the collective term for ICTs have a lot of promise for developing countries particularly in the field of education, the economy, health and international relations (Ibid, p26).

PANOS (1998) also notes that all over the world governments, donors and development organizations have realized the benefits of access to ICTs in the eradication of poverty. This realization has prompted governments to develop ICT policies in order to provide a framework for the production, distribution and use of ICTs.

The objective of this paper is to interrogate the ICT policy making process in Zimbabwe in order to ascertain the country's achievements or otherwise in the ICT sector. The paper also seeks to establish the various information gaps that characterize the Zimbabwean society. Specific questions that the paper seeks to address are:

- How have ICT policies been formulated in Zimbabwe during the past decade?

- What information divides exist in the Zimbabwean society?
- How has the policy making process impacted on the use and access to ICTs among the various social groups?

Method of Study

The present study primarily relied on interviews carried out in the capital Harare, Mudzi district of Mashonaland province and Acturus a semi-urban area also in Mashonaland East province. Documents were also analysed in order to get an insight on the ICT policy making efforts in the country. Literature on ICT and policy making in Zimbabwe was also reviewed.

Financial resources and time allowing a survey involving a representative sample from all the country's ten provinces could have been preferred method in order to capture a broader picture of the information divide in the country.

Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) Situation in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country with a land area of 390,784sqkm and is bordered on the North by Zambia, on the north east by Mozambique and to the south by South Africa and on the southwest by Botswana (Africa Internet Stats, 2008). Its population is estimated to be about 12, 382,920. About 70% of the population lives in rural areas while 30% is urban based. The country's national income stands at US\$2,180 (ibid).

Zimbabwe has made significant strides in the use of information communication technologies. However, the economic meltdown which the country has experienced over the past ten years has significantly retarded progress to transform the country into a knowledge based economy. The World Economic Forum Technology Report (2008-2009) shows that Zimbabwe scored 2.49 points and ranked 132 out of 134 among countries that were surveyed for the WEF's Networked Readiness index. The index measures the range of factors that affect a country's ability to harness information technologies for economic competitiveness and development. The country has experienced steady growth in the number of fixed phone lines over the years. Teledensity, which is the metric used to measure the 'number of telephone lines per 100 individuals' (Ndlovu, 2009) grew from 2.13 in 1998 to 2.47 in 2002. The information technology competitiveness report however, puts Zimbabwe's tele-density at 2.6.

Infrastructure

There is currently one fixed telephone line operator (TelOne) which is government owned. A second private operator (TeleAccess) had its licence withdrawn in 2005 after allegedly after flouting the requirements of its licence. There are three mobile telephone operators namely NetOne which is also owned by the government and Econet Wireless and Telecell which are both privately owned. Currently there are three Data Service Providers, one Broadcasting Transmission company (Transmedia), a state owned enterprise and six Network Licence operators (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005).

The stringent regulatory framework in the telecommunications and broadcasting sectors and lack of investment in telecommunications sector have negatively affected the diffusion of ICTs in the country.

All ICT gadgets use electricity to function however, inadequate power generation, and lack of distribution capacity have slowed down the usage and penetration of ICTs in the country (Ndlovu, 2009). Unavailability of telecommunications infrastructure and electricity makes it impossible for people in rural and peri-urban areas to access e-services such as internet and email. Even where telephone and electricity are available one has to contend with scarce international and national bandwidth which makes the internet painfully slow most of the time. According to the E-Readiness report of 2004 the country is not uniformly ready across the five attributes (which are Network Access, Network Learning, Network Society, Network economy and Network policy). Among other things the report makes the following observations about the status of ICTs in the country:

- The absence of coherent policies governing the ICT sector has hindered meaningful usage of ICTs.
- Most sectors of the economy still face serious challenges linked to the poor performance of the economy.
- The absence of ICT infrastructure such as telecommunications and electricity has hindered usage of ICTs.

- There are various information gaps which exist in the country which are based on location, gender, and class.
- Women in rural areas experience relatively high social and economic isolation arising from limited connectivity and lack of access to information, technology and training.
- Small and Medium Enterprises cannot afford ICTs due to prohibitive costs.
- Although government departments have internet and email services these services are grossly underutilized.
- There is no access to interactive communication between citizens and government and citizens among themselves.
- Lack of infrastructure is the major hindrance for ICT usage in education and training.

ICT Access and Usage

Internet and computer penetration rates are very low due to prohibitive costs of personal computers (PCs) and high costs of connecting the internet. The 2008-2009 Global Technology Report puts the availability of latest technologies score at 3.2 out of a possible score of 7 while the firm technology absorption rate is at 3.7 (Ibid; p460-461).

Other important statistics in the report include

- The number of mobile phone subscribers per 100 of the population = 6.5
- Fixed telephone lines = 2.6 per 100 of the population
- Personal computers =6.6 per 100 of the population
- Internet users=9.3 per 100 of the population
- Broadband internet subscribers 0.1 per 100 of the population

Compared to other African countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Namibia and Swaziland costs of cell phones, and sim-cards and computers are beyond the reach of the majority of citizens. A survey conducted by this author in May 2005 shows that cellular phones range between USD40 and USD100 (Bottom Range), USD250 and USD300 (Middle Range) while top of the range cellular phones cost USD400 and above. Computers are equally pricy with a full set HPDX2390 costing USD895, while 19 inch and 17 inch monitors are costing USD360 and USD330 respectively.

Fixed phone and cellular phone tariffs are also on the high side with the state owned fixed telephone service provider TelOne charging US12 cents per unit up to three minutes, while NetOne is charging US29 cents per minute and Econet charging US12 cents per minute. On the other hand internet Cafes in the capital Harare were charging between US 1 and US1.40 per hour for surfing the internet and checking email. Considering that the majority of workers are earning less than US100 per month these prices make telephoning or accessing the internet a luxury. This is revealing particularly in view of the fact the poverty the country's poverty *datum* line stands at USD427 for a family of six.

The Policy Making Process

Zimbabwe did not have a coherent Information Communication Technology policy prior to December 2005. Hitherto the launch of the policy document ICT policies could only be deduced from scattered policy documents, judicial decisions and various pieces of legislation. Resultantly, there was no proper framework to coordinate the efforts of various communities engaged in the production, distribution and use of ICTs.

Disparate policies and programmes in the ICT sector resulted in different systems and standards being applied, duplication of efforts and consequently sub-optimal use of resources across all sectors of the economy.

There has been a half-hearted approach to ICT policy formulation resulting in ICT issues being pushed to the backburner. This is evidenced by the fact that prior to 2005 ICT policy has either been implied or given token attention in policy documents such as the Nziramasanga Commission of Enquiry Report (1999), (a commission of enquiry in education), the Industrial Policy (2004), the World Information Society Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action (2003), the Zimbabwe and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2005), and the Science and Technology Policy (2002). However, the National Economic Recovery Programme (2004-2006), and the Short- Term Emergency Recovery Programme (STERP, 2009) have been more emphatic on the role of ICTs in economic development.

The common strand in all these policy documents is that they recognize and acknowledge the role of Information and Communication Technology in the

development of the country. STERP in particular, accentuates technology as a linchpin in the economic recovery agenda of the country. It states that:

“Technology is the critical engine for the transformation of Zimbabwe from a developing country to a modern industrial state. Therefore it is critical for Zimbabwe to keep abreast with global technology developments and also invest in futuristic technology. The inclusive Government will therefore through the ministry responsible for promotion and development of science and technology speed up the implementation of science and technology policy through allocation and adequate resources (Government of Zimbabwe, 2009, p73).

Elevation of the department of Information and Communication Technology to a fully fledged ministry in 2005 could be interpreted as the first important step towards putting ICTs at the centre of the developmental agenda in the country.

Judicial Precedence

Telecommunications and broadcasting have traditionally been closely guarded domains of the state in Zimbabwe. Piecemeal reforms that were witnessed in the mid 1990s in the telecommunications sector and at the turn of the century in the broadcasting sector were a result of judicial decisions. This shows that government was unwilling to liberalise these sectors, at least not at the pace dictated by global forces. Reasons for not doing so are consistent with McQuail’s observation that telecommunication and broadcasting have been traditionally associated with centralization because of compelling reasons of universal access and the scarcity of the electromagnetic spectrum (McQuail, 1994).

The intervention of courts in these sectors brought about “premature” policy changes whose consequences have been difficult to predict. For instance, in 1993 Retrofit, a company owned by Zimbabwean businessman Strive Masiyiwa filed a constitutional challenge of the Post and Telecommunications Act which gave the state

owned Post and Telecommunications Corporation (PTC) the exclusive right to provide telecommunication services, regulate radio stations and radio stations in the country.

Section 26(1) of the PTC Act conferred on the corporation the exclusive right to establish maintain and operate telephony systems within Zimbabwe. Retrofit requested PTC to issue it with a licence to establish and operate a cellular telephone service. PTC declined arguing that it had monopoly in the cellular telephony service sector. The Applicant sought an order declaring that section 26 (1) of the Posts and Telecommunication Services Act was inconsistent with section 20 (1) of the constitution of Zimbabwe. The Applicant also sought an order directing the Respondent to issue a licence to operate such a telephony service in the country and the order was granted by the court ruling that section 26 of the PTC Act violated section 20 (1) of the constitution which guarantees freedom of expression (Southern African Media Law Briefing, 1996).

The court ruled that it was wrong for PTC to monopolize telecommunication services in the country while at the same time offering an inadequate telephone network. The court also ruled that all persons are entitled to a telephone service which affords a rapid and reliable means of receiving and imparting ideas and information.

“To restrict the operation of such a service to a public monopoly unable to provide the service adequately imposes a severe restraint on the right to freedom of expression” (Southern African Media Law Briefing, (1996).

Although Retrofit won the case it was after a needless, and costly legal battle which could have been avoided had the state taken a proactive approach by rolling out an organic process of liberalization of the telecommunications sector.

The problem with judicial actions of this nature is that they are ad-hoc and government is forced to behave in a “reactionary” mode as opposed to a proactive, manner where problems are easy to predict. It is instructive to note the Post and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (POTRAZ) which is the body that regulates the telecommunications sector in the country was set up after the court ruled that Masiyiwa’s company must be given a licence.

Almost a rehearsal of the PTC-Retrofit case played itself in September 2000 when Capitol Radio, a privately owned radio station launched a constitutional challenge against the state broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC)’s monopoly on the airwaves.

Again the court granted the order resulting in the nullification of some sections of the ZBC Act (1957) and the Radio Communications Act which gave ZBC the sole right to own transmitters in the country. The nullification of ZBC monopoly meant that immediately anyone could broadcast thus creating a “free for all” scenario.

In order to avoid a scramble for the airwaves government, in a panic mode brought a temporary law, the Broadcasting Services Bill (2000) (Presidential Powers, Temporary Measures).

In 1997 a little known organization the ‘Satellite Users Association of Zimbabwe’ also successfully took PTC to court challenging its monopoly on the regulation of telecommunication (Mazango and Chiumbu, 2000, p94).

In both the Capitol Radio and Retrofit cases government resorted to Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) regulations in order to forestall haphazard liberalization

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of the airwaves. Laws crafted hurriedly without consultation often have serious loopholes. Some, have had to be amended several times immediately after promulgation. This is true with regards to the Broadcasting Services Act (2001) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) which were revised not so long after being promulgated. Judicial precedence rather than an open consultative and participatory process seems to be the preferred route in ICT policy making and yet the judiciary should review administrative arms of government rather than being an instigator of policy.

The Coopers and Lybrand Report 1994

The Ministry of Information, Post and Telecommunications under Mr Chenhamno Chimutengwende commissioned Coopers and Lybrand, an auditing firm to investigate the status of the internet and satellite sector in the country. Among other things the Commission recommended the need for the sector to:

- Improve service availability
- Maintain service availability
- Improve service quality
- Balance social and commercial needs
- Promote indigenization (Coopers and Lybrand Report, 1994).

The commissioning of a consulting firm meant there would be no input from other stakeholders including citizens who are the primary beneficiaries of these services. This demonstrates the exclusive policy-making approach of government in relation to ICTs.

Other attempts to formulate ICT policies in the 1990s have tended to exclude the majority of the citizens as they were based on 'consultative' workshops involving Post and Telecommunications Corporation (PTC) officials and some representatives of the Zimbabwe Internet Service Providers (ZISPA), representatives of corporate companies and Ministry of Education officials.

These initiatives excluded the majority of the citizens who must benefit from these policies. Even where important resolutions and recommendations were made they were not properly disseminated to be able to percolate down to the ordinary citizenry. The Coopers and Lybrand Report for example, could have suffered the fate of reports of previous Commissions which have ended up gathering dust in top level offices. It reflects the missing link between executive authority and citizens in relation to ICT issues.

It is improper to make ICT issues an exclusive domain of technocrats, the state and corporates while the populace is left out in the cold.

The result has been widespread ignorance and dissonance on matters of ICT among the ordinary citizens.

The 2005 Policy Framework

The 2005 ICT policy document is a culmination of a ‘consultative’ and ‘participatory’ process involving stakeholders within the sector. The crafting of the document involved a three-phase process which involved:

- E-Readiness Survey- an assessment of the degree to which ICTs are being adopted by the various sectors of the economy.
- E-Period which entailed an information and publicity campaign whereby members of the public would be given the opportunity to discuss findings of the E-readiness survey and the proposed policies and strategies.
- The actual drafting of the policy framework which involved collection and collation of stakeholder inputs (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005, p13-14).

Objectives of the ICT policy are “to transform Zimbabwe into a knowledge based society by the year 2020” and to accelerate “the development and application of ICTs in support of sustainable socio-economic growth and development in Zimbabwe” (ibid p15).

The manner in which the ‘consultative process’ was conducted is problematic in the sense that consultation was based on workshops which were held in the major towns and cities meaning that the bulk of people residing in rural and semi-urban areas were excluded. For instance, the e-readiness survey was conducted in eight weeks all of which were held in towns and cities as follows:

Venue	Date
Harare	2004-08-31
Bulawayo	2004-09-07
Lupane	2004-09-09
Mutare	2004-09-13
Masvingo	2004-09-15
Gweru	2004-09-17
Chinhoyi	2004-09-22

No consultative workshops were held in significant towns such as Kwekwe, Kadoma, Gokwe, Chipinge. It is impossible for workshops to attract a large number of people given that they are held in venues with very limited capacity.

It therefore stands to reason that inputs in policy documents reflect contours chalked by the existing digital divide since only those with access to mass media and information and those who stay in towns could participate in the policy formulation process. Thus ICT policy making process in Zimbabwe only involves targeted segments of society usually those who have economic and political power. Policy making by its nature should be an all encompassing process rather than the 'buffet' approach whereby certain privileged groups in society are selected.

This might explain the very low level of awareness about the policy among members of the public. Mazango and Chiumbu (2000) note that

policy making process is two-fold. The first is a green paper which consists of questions being posed to the public by the state. Answers to these questions help government to formulate its propositions on issues that require policy discussion. Following submissions on the green paper, a white paper process is initiated which essentially represents government's position on issues that are under discussion (Mazango and Chiumbu, 2000, p96).

The Information Divides in Zimbabwe

The most glaring information divide in Zimbabwe is one which is based on geographical location. Access to ICTs is lowest in rural areas where electricity and telephony networks are either non-existent or very limited. Even where electricity is available frequent and prolonged load-shedding have rendered the use of ICTs such as radio and cellular phone, almost impossible. It is common for electricity to be cut for between twenty-four and seventy-two hours.

As a result telecommunication transmitters are almost always not working. Even radio, which is the most important source of news in rural areas is hardly available due to the high cost of batteries. Within the rural areas there are however, a few elites who have more access to information than others. ICT usage is lowest among the elderly, women, and the disabled who either lack the economic means or literacy needed for the usage of these gadgets. Elites such as teachers, nurses,

policemen agricultural extension workers and others in rural service centres relatively have more access to ICTs in rural areas. In rural areas the cellular phone has become an important tool of communication between city and rural dwellers. Villagers sometimes travel between 5 and 20kms in order to get to the house of someone with a cell phone so they can relay an illness or death message to the city. Telephone calls or text messages are usually free of charge if it is a funeral or illness message. Sometimes there is a nominal fee which is paid in kind. Compared to rural areas access and use of ICTs is relatively higher in urban areas because of the availability of electricity and telecommunication infrastructure.

In the urban areas radio and television transmission is better notwithstanding the fact that geographical coverage has fallen between 45% and 55% due to antiquated transmission equipment. Urban dwellers are able to expand their sources of information through the internet, local and foreign newspapers, email, satellite, radio and television, DVDs imported from outside the country. Most households in the urban areas are acquiring satellite equipment to enable access international TV stations. Because of the high costs associated with MultiChoice (DSTV) subscription fees (USD620 for 50 channels, per year) Fortec and Wiztec Decorders imported mainly from South Africa enable access to South African and Botswana TV stations. A full set of this satellite equipment costs anything between USD100 and USD150.

Most big companies and all government departments in cities have internet and email facilities meaning that those with formal employment can access these technologies at their workplaces. Colleges, universities, and internet cafes are also a major source of email and internet particularly for the youth, the informally employed and others who do not have internet at work.

The major factor hindering access however, is the high prices charged by internet cafes to access these technologies.

A divide within an Information Divide

ICT access and usage within urban areas reflects the contours marked by the lopsided distribution of wealth. Access and usage is highest in affluent low density suburbs where rich company executives, government top brass and young professionals live. This is followed by medium density suburbs and lastly the high density areas where the majority working classes live. Economics is the major index determining access, use and ownership of ICTs in urban areas. Middle and low density dwellers relatively enjoy better economic leverage than high density dwellers, as a result have more access to computers, internet and email and other ICT gadgets. Most households have access to satellite television, own a computer and have a greater chance of accessing the Internet either at school, college, internet cafes or at work. Most internet cafes are situated within the city or its environs which makes it easier for low and middle density dwellers to have access to the Internet. There are

over 30 Internet cafes in the capital Harare and surrounding areas. Almost every shopping centre in the low density suburbs of Harare has one or two internet cafes yet the dormitory town of Chitungwiza has none in spite of it being the country's third largest city in the country. This clearly shows that income plays a very important role in determining ownership, use and access of ICTs in Zimbabwe. The economic crisis which gripped the country over the past ten years has greatly reduced the diffusion of ICTs due to a hyperinflationary environment that has spawned low disposable incomes and astronomical costs of ICT gadgets. This has made it difficult for workers to save let alone being able to afford basic necessities of sustenance. Because economic hardships have been more severe on the poor working classes who live in townships the information gap between the rich and the poor has been widening more than anywhere else.

Information divide along gender lines

Women have borne the brunt of the economic meltdown more than men since women constitute the bulk of the unemployed (unemployment rate is estimated by 94%, OCHA, 2008) in the country meaning that most women operate on the fringes of the economy. Most women reside in the rural areas where they are involved in subsistence agriculture meaning that they have little opportunities for formal employment. The country continues to score badly in the World Economic Forum gender gap indexes such as the number of women who participate in the labour

force, wage inequality and income (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2009, p167). Statistics show that the literacy rate for females stands at 87% against 94% for males.

This means that not only economic considerations have militated against women joining the information superhighway but also issues like illiteracy have played a considerable role in information disparities between women and men. More access to ICTs among men makes them better leveraged to access information and consequently to participate in developmental processes thus confirming the adage 'information is power'. It is therefore not surprising that the information divide reflects contours marked by socio-economic differentials embedded in society.

The Elderly versus Youth

Besides gender, age is also a key factor in determining access to ICTs. The youth constitute the bulk of people residing in towns and cities while the majority of those aged 65 and above (4% of the population) live in rural areas where access to ICTs is not only low but also the ICT infrastructure is non-existent. Young people who are considered technologically savvy are the leading innovators and early adopters of information and communication technologies. On the other hand, the elderly are slow in responding to change and sometimes tend to shun new innovations (Ngoma,2008). Ownership of cellular phones is skewed in favour of the youth Young people also have access to computers and

the internet at school, college or university and a good number report having email accounts. A visit to internet cafés in downtown Harare for example revealed that young people are the main patrons of cafes. The most popular services sought by these young people are email, job search, watching movies and lastly playing video games. Young people some in school uniform were observed watching video games in groups of three or more suggesting that the Internet has for the youth become what television was in the 1960s and 1970s.

It is instructive to note that for some of these young people ICT gadgets like the cellular phones are regarded as more than a means of communication. They are a status symbol whereby a person is 'modern' or 'old fashioned' depending on whether owns one or not. It is instructive to note that ICTs have become important tools around which youth identities are formed and sustained. It is therefore not surprising that peer pressure and the need to be accepted is a major driver in the diffusion of ICTs among the youth.

Disability and the information divide in

Between 10-12% of Zimbabwe's population suffer from different types of disabilities (Ngoma, 2008). The peculiar condition of disabled people and their lack of access to basic rights and freedoms that other people take for granted results in people with disabilities being worse off than the rest of society in terms of access to ICTs.

Lack of access to ICTs isolates people with disabilities from a wide range of information which is crucial for their individual and collective development (NASCOH, 2006). Research shows that households with members with disabilities have lower standards of living than those without and literacy rates are lowest among the disabled population (Eide et al, 2003). Eide et al also note that more disabled people are unemployed than people without disabilities thus making disabled people some of the most economically disadvantaged groups in society. Access to buildings such as banks, hotels, work places, and internet cafes are not accessible to people with disabilities. For instance, research by the National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH) shows that 83% of buildings in the capital Harare Central Business District which house places of employment and internet cafes are inaccessible to people living with disabilities. Access to braille technology and other assistive technologies such as 'JAWS' which can allow visually impaired people to read from computer monitors is equally elusive because of cost. As a result disabled people are found at the tail end of the information superhighway. Without access to information disabled people are poorly positioned to participate in the crafting of national policies including ICT policies therefore creating a vicious cycle of poverty of information among this group.

It is imperative for government to cater for the information needs of underprivileged groups in society such as women, the elderly, and the

disabled so that they are empowered to participate in developmental processes of the nation.

Taking on board these groups in the ICT policy formulation processes should be seen as the first step towards addressing the almost endemic information gaps which exists between the 'information haves' and the 'information have nots'.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the ICT policy making process in Zimbabwe. It was noted that ICT policy making in Zimbabwe has largely been top-down as it has been driven by judicial action rather than being participatory. This has resulted in uncoordinated approach by the disparate policy communities in the sector on issues relating to the production, importation and distribution of ICTs. The ad-hoc manner in which these policies have evolved has resulted in the alienation of certain segments of the citizenry such as the women, the aged and the disabled resulting in acute information divides between the economically powerful and the underprivileged groups in society.

The exclusive nature of the policy framework has resulted in yawning gaps between social groups that are determined by geography, age, gender, and physical abilities. The paper recommends a more inclusive and holistic ICT policy making process which caters for the needs of all concerned including the disadvantaged segments of society

so that the information divides which characterize the Zimbabwean society can be reduced significantly.

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