Role of Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Development using mobile Technologies

The United Nations has recognised the need for a holistic approach of sustainable development where health, environment and social wellbeing are being targeted together through the new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the healthcare sector Universal Health coverage (UHC) is the platform that seeks to overcome inequality in tackling the service provision gap and financial gap that populations face. The role of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) to build the essential building blocks of UHC has been accepted, in particular, the proliferation of mobile phones in developing countries, have raised the spectre of better access to quality healthcare in a cost-effective manner.

Mobile phones are instrumental to socio-economic and healthcare development in many disadvantaged sections of the population. Mobile communication devices, in conjunction with Internet and social media, present opportunities to enhance disease prevention and management by extending health interventions beyond the reach of traditional care—an approach referred to as mHealth. The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced [4] that m-health has the “potential to transform the face of health service delivery across the globe”.

The Nobel laureate Prof Md. Yunus feels these SDGs can be realised by the active development of entrepreneurs that are likely to form the engine room of economic and social development in many countries. He believes these entrepreneurs can now exploit mobile phone based technologies to achieve these goals that cannot be achieved just by government investment only. Interestingly, the Govt of China has been actively encouraging universities to impart entrepreneurship education to its engineering and technical students. This requires inter-disciplinary approach to technical education and research, my main strength and expertise and hence Prof Pradeep Ray have been appointed as the Director of the Centre For Entrepreneurship at the JI (UM-SJTU). So his work plan aims to leverage the multi-disciplinary research knowledge (through partnerships with several major institutions in the world):
and the partnership of the excellent schools in the University of Michigan and Shanghai Jiao Tong University to help develop and refine social business models for SDGs and UHC, initially within China and then to other countries in Asia Pacific. mHealth will act as an exemplar for this research through ongoing partnerships with global bodies, such as the IEEE, WHO, ITU and EU and may help China lead innovative, entrepreneurial socio-economic development in the whole Asia-Pacific region.