Project: Knowledge Networks through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities

Workshop on the Consolidation and Expansion of the ESCWA Knowledge Network
Damascus, 24-27 April 2010

Preliminary Information Note

1. Background

Launched in mid-2006, the United Nations Development Account project entitled "Knowledge Networks through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities" is currently in its final stages of implementation. Led by ESCWA and co-jointly managed with the other United Nations Regional Commissions, its main objective is to empower disadvantaged communities by transforming selected ICT access points/telecentres into networked knowledge hubs. By providing, developing, organizing, sharing and disseminating knowledge in areas of sustainable development that include employment, education, gender and health, the project will improve the living standards of the targeted communities.

Past project activities have included: (a) The review and assessment of ICT access points/telecentres in the ESCWA region; (b) The selection of ICT access points/telecentres to be included in the pilot phase of the project; (c) The development of a detailed project implementation plan; (d) The preparation of regional and global strategies covering the transformation into knowledge hubs and networking processes; (e) The design and implementation of a knowledge network portal; and (f) Workshops aiming at sharing knowledge, strengthening the networking process and building the capacities of telecentre managers.

The next planned activity, subject of this information note, is the “Workshop on the Consolidation and Expansion of the ESCWA Knowledge Network.” Scheduled to take place in Damascus between 24 and 27 April 2010, the workshop will be held under the patronage of the Syrian Minister of Communications and Technology and is being organized in collaboration with the Syrian Computer Society and the Syria Trust for Development.

2. Objectives

This workshop will likely be the final opportunity to assemble knowledge hub managers during the pilot phase of the Knowledge Networks project. Its main objective is to entice them to work in tandem with the previously elected secretariat of the ESCWA Knowledge Network to: (a) Define the role and responsibilities of the regional secretariat; (b) Devise a plan to ensure the sustainability of the network after the folding of the pilot phase of the project; and (c) Adopt norms and standards that will govern the expansion of the network. A secondary objective is the development of the capacity of knowledge hub managers to effectively gather and publish information and knowledge pertinent to the communities they serve.

3. Topics

The workshop will include presentations, panel discussions and hands-on training sessions. It will cover the following topics:

- The role and responsibilities of the secretariat of the ESCWA Knowledge Network;
- The sustainability of the network beyond the lifetime of the project;
- The condition, norms and standards governing the expansion of the network;
- The development of a new interface and of a global layer for the Knowledge Networks’ Portal;
- Effective information and knowledge dissemination with emphasis on:
a) Difference between information and knowledge;
b) What constitutes information that is relevant to the development of the communities served by knowledge hubs;
c) Basic drafting and communication skills for promotional purposes in knowledge hubs; and
d) Ensuring maximum reach and exposure for the published information of knowledge hubs.

4. Expected outcome

The main outcomes of the workshop will be: (a) The terms and conditions governing the activities of the secretariat of the ESCWA Knowledge Network; (b) A sustainability plan for the aforementioned network; and (c) The conditions, norms and standards governing its expansion. Knowledge hub managers are also expected to develop the capacity of collecting, drafting, editing and publishing information that is pertinent to the communities they serve and to the community development goals of the project.

5. Participants

The workshop will be attended mainly by the managers of telecentres/knowledge hubs which are part of the above mentioned “Knowledge Networks” project or potential candidates to join the regional network.

6. Venue and dates

The three-day workshop will take place between 24 and 26 April 2010 at the Syrian Telecommunications Establishment (STE), Mazzeh Autostrade, Damascus, Syria. On the 27 April 2010 field visits will be organized to the Barzeh and Zabadani knowledge hubs.

7. Language

The main working language of the workshop will be Arabic. English may be used as a second working language. Participants are expected to understand both languages since there won’t be any simultaneous translation.

8. Additional information

Enquiries and requests for additional information should be addressed to:

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