Knowledge Networks through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities

- Project Overview -

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Project background

- Jointly implemented by United Nations Regional Commissions, with the Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD) at ESCWA as the lead organization, over a period of 36 months starting in 2006.

- Funded by the United Nations Development Account
Terms and Definitions (1/4)

ICT access points:
- Centers that provide community citizens with access to technology and Internet access specifically

Telecentres:
- Access points that are community development oriented; with shared ICT resources (specifically computers) linking socio-economic objectives directly with the use of ICTs (i.e. employment, poverty reduction)

Terms and Definitions (2/4)

Disadvantaged Communities:
- Communities in underserved areas, both urban and rural, that include the following target groups, among others:
  - Women
  - Disabled
  - Unemployed
  - Poor
  - Youth
  - Elderly
  - Immigrants
  - Micro-enterprises
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| **Knowledge Hubs:**  
  - ICT access points that acquire, organize and disseminate knowledge directly related to socio-economic development  
  They also:  
  - Facilitate the creation and dissemination of knowledge on socio-economic development  
  - Build a reservoir of knowledge on topics relevant to the community’s needs (e.g. agriculture, fishing etc…)  
  - Provide value added services to the community, beyond communications  
  - Allow people to find employment, enhance job efficacy and improve quality of life |

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| **Knowledge Networks:**  
  - Decentralized structures that promote cooperation between knowledge hubs, via a virtual space such an Internet-based portal  
  - Aim at knowledge sharing  
  - Bridge local and global knowledge  
  - Are facilitated by knowledge managers |
Objective

- To empower poor and disadvantaged communities, women in particular, through transforming selected existing ICT access points into knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks, with the purpose of providing, developing, organizing, sharing and disseminating knowledge pertinent to these communities.

Main Activities

- Review and assessment of existing ICT access points;
- Setting a global framework and detailed implementation plan;
- Transformation of access points into knowledge hubs;
- Activating knowledge hubs and engaging beneficiaries;
- Implementation of global/regional networks;
- Launching knowledge networks amongst stakeholders;
- Project evaluation and feedback.
Relationship to MDGs (1/2)

- The project contributes directly to Goal 8 of the MDGs: “Develop a global partnership for development”, which includes “accelerated transfer of technology and improved employment opportunities for the growing ranks of young people in the developing world.”
- It aims at accomplishing target 7 “In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.”

Relationship to MDGs (1/2)

The project also contributes to:

- MDG 1: “Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger”, by promoting employability, job creation and entrepreneurship;
- MDG 2: “Achieve universal primary education”, through the use of e-learning applications;
- MDG 3: “Promote gender equality and empower women”, through access to education, health services, jobs and political participation.
Expected Accomplishments

- Established global/regional knowledge networks for community development
- Enriched value proposition of ICT access points through their transformation into knowledge hubs
- Increased engagement of beneficiaries in poor areas and disadvantaged communities in knowledge hubs.

Strategy - Global/Regional

- Promoting bilateral, regional and international cooperation, particularly South-South cooperation, in the areas of ICT access centres and community development through establishing a network of activists, actors, and policymakers
- Creating global/regional knowledge platforms for learning, sharing experiences, and exchanging best practices
Strategy – National Level

- Increasing awareness and understanding among decision-makers in governments/municipalities and NGOs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition of the potential of using ICT access points as knowledge hubs for the disadvantaged communities

- Assisting those decision makers in governments/municipalities building indigenous capacity in policy making pertaining to disseminating knowledge networks in disadvantaged communities

Strategy – Community Level (1)

- Revitalizing and enriching selected existing ICT access points, through enhancing their services and knowledge management

- Developing and promoting value-added services of ICT access points to better serve their local communities

- Networking existing selected ICT access point with each other to share experiences and best practices

- Transforming selected ICT access points into knowledge hubs of the global knowledge platform, providing, developing, organizing, sharing and disseminating knowledge pertinent to these communities
Transformation of ICT access points into knowledge hubs

Activating and promoting the engagement of beneficiaries at the community level in the services offered by the established knowledge hubs

Promoting the engagement of knowledge hubs with partners from their respective communities, such as schools, hospitals and entrepreneurships

Disseminating success stories to be combined in a pamphlet, posted on website, and shared as valuable knowledge gained from the project

Strategy – Community Level (2)
Progress (1/6)

- **Inception meeting** at the UN House in Beirut during 13-16 November 2006, attended by focal points from all five regional commissions. It was specifically agreed that project would focus on:
  - Strengthening existing knowledge hubs and networking them; tackling the weaker ICT access points in need of transformation to knowledge hubs
  - Making use of regional meetings to create regional networks, while analyzing how other networks interact and transfer expertise, in order to harmonize efforts between regional commissions at the global level
  - Development of implementation plans at the RC level
Progress (2/6)

- Regional reviews and assessments of ICT access points, which:
  - Reviewed the status of existing community ICT access points and the communities they serve, with gender analysis
  - Indicated priority areas of service in the different member countries, showing best practices for each priority area
  - Identified operational models for sustainability, required resources, and the role of govt. and potential partners
  - Investigated the relationship between ICT and socio-economic development in the region
  - Described successful multi-stakeholder partnerships and governance schemes for ICT access points and proposed business models
  - Suggest priority areas where telecentres may have strongest local impact

Progress (3/6)

- Global review and assessment of ICT access points, which:
  - Consolidated the five regional assessment reports into one global report
  - Narrowed down the choices pinpointed by regional reviews and singled out recommendations that would be most feasible for the successful implementation and sustainability of regional and global knowledge networks of ICT access points in disadvantaged communities
Progress (4/6)

- **Regional Stakeholders Meetings** which:
  - Brought together the various ICT access points
  - Made them aware of the purpose of the project and various activities and responsibilities
  - Discussed knowledge network strategies, possible mechanisms and tools for their implementation
  - Identified common concerns, activities and partnerships
  - Defined the role and tasks of the regional manager
  - Recommended the creation of a portal for networking

Progress (5/6)

- **Selection of a Global Knowledge Manager and four Regional Knowledge Managers** who:
  - Developed an global strategy for knowledge networking
  - Drafted strategies for upgrading ICT access points to knowledge hubs and networking them at the regional level
  - Prepared elements of regional plans of action for discussion with stakeholders, adoption and implementation
Progress (6/6)

- Developed a Portal, which will allow:
  - Telecentres to create Web sites and disseminate information about their activities, locally, regionally and globally
  - Networking of knowledge hubs/access points at the regional and global levels
  - Creating specialized discussion forums/communities of practice at the local, national, regional and global levels

Next Steps (2008-2009)

- Building and disseminating knowledge in regional networks and hubs (incl. training on knowledge sharing and networking);
- Implementation of knowledge hubs and networks at the regional level (followed by launching of knowledge networks);
- Building global networks (incl. consultative networks meeting);
- Evaluation of the project.
Sustainability

- Partnership between the local government, the private sector and NGOs
- Good governance at the regional and national levels
- A solid business plan

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Number of established global/regional networks for the different priority areas
- Number of identified value-added services based on the established knowledge networks
- Number of parties actively involved in the established networks
- Number of officials from governments/municipalities from participating countries involved in the launch of the Knowledge networks
- Number of transformed ICT access points into knowledge hubs
- Number of new services offered by knowledge hubs to the respective communities
- Number of beneficiaries in poor areas and in disadvantaged communities engaged in the established knowledge networks
- Number of women in poor areas and disadvantaged communities benefiting from the established knowledge networks
- Number of success stories resulting from established networks
Thank you!