

CONCEPT NOTE

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In the last decade international and regional policies have addressed the opportunities and importance of ICT interventions in rural areas in developing countries in general and more specifically in Africa.

In this context, many Telecentres or community information centre initiatives have been supported by international (e.g. UNESCO, UNDP, FAO, EU) and bilateral donors (IDRC, SDC, USAID) and implemented through projects with (inter)national NGOs in the last 2 decades.

This concept of shared access to information was first launched in Europe and Canada in the early 1980s through the “telecottage” movement. The movement was accelerated in the second half of the 1990s and was boosted by the digital revolution and the emerging interest of development organizations and the private sector. These initiatives were set up as pilots with different methodologies and services.

Therefore, attempts to define Telecentres are diverse: some see them as information kiosks with a mix of ICT tools such as radio, photocopier, telephone, fax ... and Internet connection; others focus on the nature of services offered such as telemedicine or money transfer. There is no real consensus around this question. As stated in an IDRC report, the Telecentre concept «is a phenomenon still in discovery and in the various places where it is created, the local context colours its final form. It is an instrument for development whose adaptation and mutation is far from complete and perhaps not for some time yet. As a result, attempts to classify the currently existing types are still quite unsophisticated »

*Concept of shared
access to information*

Background

African Rural areas are suffering from food insecurity and increased poverty as results of several factors amongst which lack of enough income, low productivity and natural resources degradation. In this context, shared access to relevant information and knowledge can significantly contribute toward positive change. Access to information requires conducive policies in favour of investment in reliable infrastructure, well defined services and commitments of all stakeholders to enhance positive social and economic changes.

*How to make
Telecentre in Africa
sustainable and
effective?*

Project scope and objectives

Expected results

R1. Increased access to relevant content and appropriate channels

R2. Telecentres institutional and staff capacities strengthened in Africa

R3. Increased awareness and networking through various channels

Considering that a Telecentre is “an effective service for increasing rural communities’ livelihoods, the project will promote rural social entrepreneurship. It will operate as a network facilitator and capacity building enabler mainly at national level in order to reinforce the regional (inter-country) and international telecentre networking initiatives.

General objectives

The overall objective is to contribute to rural communities social and economical changes consistent with the Millenium Development Goals.

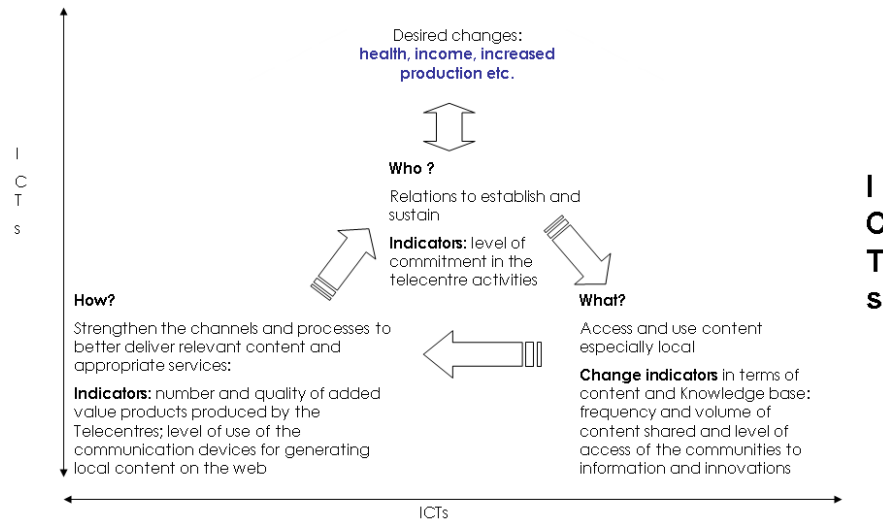
Purpose

Contribution to the sustainability of Africa’s rural telecentres through increased staff and telecentre capacities.

Beneficiaries

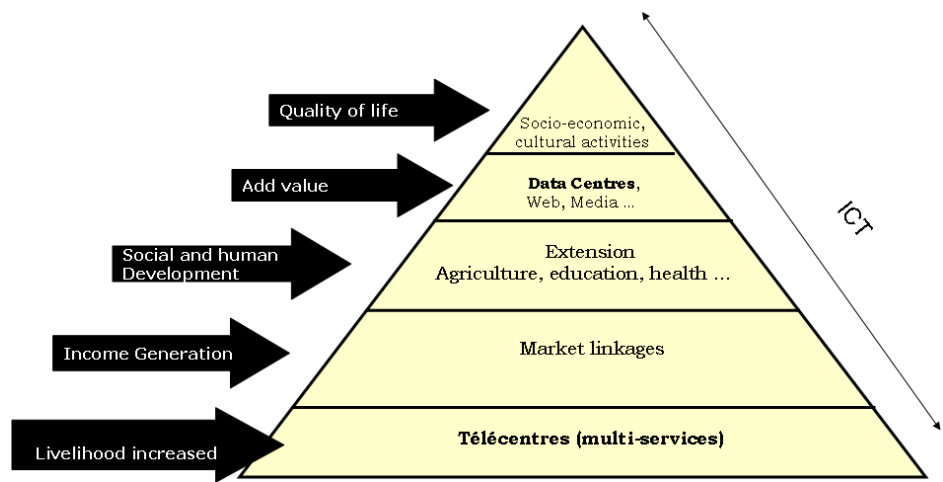
Direct: National ICT advisers and/or planners of Government in Africa; Officers in charge of ICT programme implementation in regional organisations; Telecentres Network coordinators in Africa

Indirect: Rural communities in Africa.



Service framework

The selection of content and services would be based on their ability to impact positively the rural communities through increasing their livelihood, helping income generation and enabling socio-economic development. This means that a specific content/ service should be in a marketable format for it to be selected as a part of the multiple services to be provided by the telecentres. At all the different layers, ICTs will be important enablers for making these services possible.



Strategic partners

- Government bodies (agriculture, telecommunication, ICTs) in Charge of ICTs national plan especially for rural areas
- Regional ICTs programmes in regional organisations
- Bilateral programmes from developed countries supporting ICTs programmes in d in African rural areas
- International organisations involved in ICTs programmes for African rural areas
- International foundations and NGOs involved in ICT programmes for African rural areas

Project activities

For the next three years, the CTA telecentres project will develop a number of activities which can be grouped as follows:

Access to content and services

The project will extensively use the CTA publications programme to provide content to the telecentre movement through Telecentre.org and African regional platforms such as SATNET, UGABYTES etc.

In addition and where necessary, CTA will dedicate resources to develop new publications. The development of these publications will require the full participation of telecentre practitioners and stakeholders.

In 2009, the TelecentresAfrica portal will be further developed to serve as a platform for sharing experiences and content among the key players involved in Telecentre activities in Africa. More specifically, the following activities will be implemented:

Develop a TelecentresAfrica Repository; to date more than 400 records already stored in a relational database;

Finalise the guide on Sustainable Telecentres in Africa. The main tool for developing this guide will be the TelecentresAfrica WIKI, a working space for sharing knowledge and experiences on options and solutions for the most urgent challenges of telecentres in African rural areas. The guide will be the result of a collaborative effort of the main telecentre development stakeholders of Africa and will benefit from the experiences and lessons learnt from past and ongoing telecentre activities and ICT4D activities of a wide range of development partners in Africa.

Increase access to relevant content and appropriate services – Result 1

Strengthen capacities

The selection of the centres to be supported will consider several criteria amongst which their ability to integrate the sustainability factors identified during the study phase of the project. The Centres to be supported should also be part of wider national or regional ICTs development plans rather than experimenting once more pilot initiatives. This support will be provided through the provision of targeted documentation, training in content management, technical maintenance, ICT use and telecentre management as as a private company with social objectives.

The activities will cover different areas with a strong focus on institutional and human capacity building (please see Budget below).

In 2009, the following projects will be assessed for submission to CPC:

- Implementing the Community Information Centre initiative (Ghana) – collaboration IICD – **PFC 03/18/05**
- ICT for Community Development Coordinating Project at the EICTDA (Ethiopia) – collaboration IICD
- Community ICT Development project (ICTAD) – Sustainable Telecentres networks (Ethiopia) – in collaboration with IICD

Awareness rising and networking

The CTA Telecentre project will support the global telecentre movement initiatives especially through Telecentre.org and others in promoting the empowerment of local communities to better use ICTs. In this regard, the project will contribute to identifying the key development agenda link to agricultural and rural development sector, and will use the most appropriate platforms and tools to bring local community development issues to the debate.

Choices for the policy agenda will be made in dialogue with key partners and stakeholders. Policy support may be provided through conferences bringing together thematic expertise at regional or global level, the collection of policy documents and the provision of information to support regional and national telecentre stakeholders.

The activities planned in 2009 consist of:

- Support to SATNET (Southern African Telecentre Network) to ensure increased collaboration and exchange of information services and networking among local telecentre organizations in key social and economic sectors in Southern African countries.
- Support to a sensitization workshop organized by Connect Africa in Zambia targeting the Government of Zambia
- Organise a study tour in India to allow telecentres practitioners to see the up-scaling of telecentres in practice.

*Strengthen institutional
and staff capacities –
Result 2*

*Increase awareness
and networking through
various channels –
Result - 3*

Project management

The overall management of the project at CTA will remain within the Communication Channels and Services Department (CCSD). Other Departments will be actively involved such as the Information Products and Services (IPS) and the Capacity building Departments.

Externally, the project will directly collaborate with the telecentre support agencies to better coordinate interventions at different levels. Such institutions include: InfoBridge Foundation, Telecentre.org and IICD.

In addition, inputs of external advisors, especially private sectors interested in investing in community information centres (ex: Connect Africa, microcredit institutions etc), Asian telecentres movement) will be required.

Direct funding will be required from CTA for the period of 2009 to 2011. For this period, financial input will come from the Communication Service Department (training and ICT programmes) and Publication and Distribution Department (information services and publication programmes).

Moreover, to ensure the sustainability of the project, additional funding is necessary especially in the field of lobbying, awareness raising and up scaling of the project.

National telecentre projects should be reinforced through training and direct support to formulate projects for seeking additional funds.

Potential partners in these areas include international organisations such as FAO, bilateral donors (GTZ, IDRC etc.) and the private sector (microcredit banks, entrepreneurs).

*Building progressively
self autonomy*
