



Question 10b/2: Development of multi-purpose community telecentres

STUDY GROUP 2

SOURCE: PROPOSED RAPPORTEUR FOR QUESTION 10/2

TITLE: DEVELOPMENT OF MULTI-PURPOSE COMMUNITY TELECENTRES

The following text is a proposed revision to a new Question which was presented at the World Telecommunication Development Conference 1998 in Valletta (Malta) in March 1998 (Ref. Doc. 73, item 20.2, page 60-63).

1 Statement of the problem or situation

~~In the present context of globalization, it is necessary to put an end to the isolation of rural communities so that they can pool experience and keep abreast of progress in society, and thereby identify for themselves the opportunities that exist for their own activities and needs—in short, so that they too can have a chance to contribute to and draw on the global information society. The crucial role of information and telecommunications technology (ICT) as an engine for economic growth in the emerging information society is today widely recognized. ICT also provide tools for social and cultural development and preservation of the environment. However, the vast majority of populations in rural and remote areas as well as in poor urban and suburban areas are currently deprived of access to ICT.~~

~~RDisadvantaged also by distance, rural communities have not benefited from worldwide and national progress as much as urban societies. In addition to immense problems of infrastructure, organization and human and financial resources, rural areas lack access to information which would be useful for their needs and to training facilities, as well as to machinery insufficient financial resources and poor social services, such as education and health care, rural communities lack access to information and for communicating with those involved in development knowledge resources relevant to their needs, as well as facilities to communicate with people outside their neighborhood. They are thus excluded from the progress made by "city-based" institutions. At the same time, the information, knowledge and talents available in rural communities are not accessible from outside the village and often neglected or looked down upon, which leads to a break with traditional modes of life without any real prospects for change.development.~~

Today's developments in telecommunications and telematics represent for rural communities ~~not just~~ an opportunity to remedy ~~the~~ is unbalanced situations ~~existing at present, but also a challenge to make~~ by making a leap forward into the information age ~~and and, thus,~~ to become equal and competitive partners in our global society.

~~An integrated model of services for information, education and telecommunications~~ The development of sustainable models for provision of a broad range of information and communication services, as well as the necessary user training and support, at affordable cost, would be a first step in the process of improving ~~training in the rural environment and could stimulate education for development.~~ the present situation.

2 Question or issue proposed for study

~~How to set up and develop services that will involve the rural population? What facilities should telecentres be equipped with and how should they be organized in order to secure the participation of the people in applications for development activities, particularly in the educational and cultural fields? Consideration should also be given at the same time to ways of carrying out an evaluation in order to measure the impact of telecentres in the development process.~~

Develop "best practice guidelines and recommendations" and a forum for electronic exchange of experience for the planning, implementation and operation of multi-purpose community telecentres (MCTs), as tools for provision of Universal Access to information and telecommunication services in rural and remote areas, and in underserved urban and semi-urban areas.

These guidelines and recommendations should address all significant aspects of the MCTs themselves, the telecommunication networks which provide connectivity to the MCTs, and the information and communication services which are provided at the MCTs. Areas of study should also include national information and telecommunications policy, and regulatory provisions and arrangements, required to facilitate the development of MCTs.

The guidelines and recommendations should be based on current and recent experience with MCTs worldwide. In particular, the evaluation of the MCT pilot projects, which are already started within the framework of the BAAP Programme No. 9 (now VAP Programme No. 3), will enable identification of "best practice" models. Careful attention must be paid to the financial viability and sustainability of MCTs, taking into account all revenue streams, particular those from telecommunication traffic, both outward and inward.

3 Description of the expected output

~~Evaluation studies in the field focusing on pilot projects (such as those undertaken by ITU and UNESCO) in order to make telecentres more viable in future and to develop guidelines for appropriate telematic services.~~

The expected output will be a comprehensive and easily used body of knowledge that will provide guidance and direction in establishing and operating MCTs to provide Universal Access to information and telecommunication services in rural and remote areas, and in underserved urban and semi-urban areas. This body of knowledge will include a broad range of information, which should meet the needs of national information and telecommunication policy makers, regulators, network planners, telecommunication and MCT operators, and service providers. In particular it will include guidelines for operation, maintenance and commercial management of the MCTs, in order to provide profitable relevant, high quality service on a continuous, commercially viable and sustainable basis.

4 Required timing of the expected output

Three years.

5 "Proposers/sponsors" - Those who requested study of the Question or issue

UNESCO, in view of the interest of Member States and on the basis of its collaboration with ITU.

6 Sources of input required in carrying out the study

ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, FAO, WHO, UNEP, development sector NGOs, public telecommunication operators and public authorities of Member States concerned, [concerned private sector equipment and service providers](#).

7 Target audience for the output

a) Indicate expected types of target audience, by noting all relevant points on the matrix which follows

	Developed countries	Developing countries	LDCs
Telecom policy makers		Yes	Yes
Telecom regulators		Yes	Yes
Service providers (operators)		Yes	Yes
Manufacturers	Yes	Yes	Yes

Rationale: The development of significant numbers of MCTs will present extensive sales opportunities for manufacturers of widely varied products in many countries worldwide.

b) Target audience - Who specifically will use the output.

~~Governments of the different Member States concerned, rural associations and communities, development NGOs involved in the field, regional and international organizations in the development sector.~~

The output of this Question will have great value for those responsible for information and telecommunication policy and regulatory development, , and for the provision of information and telecommunication services in rural and remote areas and underserved urban and semi-urban areas. It will also provide potential entrepreneurs with sustainable models for MCTs, including guidelines for how to set up, manage, operate and maintain such facilities and services. telecom and IT equipment suppliers will get a better picture of potential markets in rural and remote areas. Finally, the output will contribute to the establishment of networks of MCTs, with support of the Programme No. 3 of the Valetta Action Plan, that delivers useful, good quality and affordable information and telecommunication services.

c) Proposed methods for implementation of the results.

~~———— Campaigns to increase the awareness and enlist the support of the local populations around the idea and in the establishment of telecentres.~~

~~———— Training of managers from the communities to manage and run the telecentres; they will be responsible, among other things, for familiarizing members of the public with the telecentres and for maintenance~~

Based on the outcome of the study work under this Question, it is proposed to create a "living compendium of MCT best practice". Studies and information which is developed under this Question will be made available in hard copy and also electronically. An important aspect of the "living compendium" will be the ongoing collection, aggregation and distribution of operating statistics and other information from and to operators of MCT-based telecommunication services throughout the world. This could be supported by the Programme 3 of the Valletta Action Plan.

The analysis and comparison of the statistical information made available on a continuing basis will highlight success factors but also reasons for failures in the provision of relevant, good quality, attractively priced services that are profitable and hence sustainable. The systematic capture and analysis on a regular basis of appropriate "key indicators", followed by appropriate management action, is essential to ensure the continuing provision of the best possible service at the lowest possible price.

In a longer perspective it is expected that the MCT models developed will be replicated at a large scale on a commercial basis (possibly as private-public sector joint ventures or franchised to private entrepreneurs or to local cooperatives).

8 Proposed method of handling this Question or issue

a) How? Indicate the suggested handling of the proposed Question or issue

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Within a study group: | |
| – Question (over a multi-year study period) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| – Focus group (12 months duration maximum) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2) Within regular BDT activity: | |
| – Programmes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| – Projects | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| – Expert consultants | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3) In other ways - Describe (e.g. regional, within other organizations, jointly with other organizations, etc.) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

By means of surveys and questionnaires, and through the electronic forum and listservers, share experience and seek the opinion of nationals involved in operating the MCTs as well as national, regional and international organizations and development-oriented NGOs which might be involved in activities around the multi-purpose community telecentres.

b) Why? Explain why you selected the alternative under a) above

One objective of the BAAP Programme No. 9 (now VAP Programme No. 3) is to develop "best practice", replicable models for MCTs through a series of pilot projects. Therefore the Question should primarily be handled within the framework of this programme. As part of this programme, consultants will be required to manage and support the complex evaluation process, including the

preparation of analytical case studies and cross-cultural comparisons. Within this programme it is also envisaged to establish an electronic forum for exchange of experience among the many MCT pilot projects and organisations involved in these. It is both necessary and useful to involve development players already in contact with the local people in the telecentre projects.

9 Coordination requirements of the study

IDRC, ITU and UNESCO, with financial support from DANIDA and Sida, have come to develop sound collaboration in the field of telematics, particularly in MCT pilot projects. A number of other international development agencies, such as the FAO, UNDP and WHO have recently joined in these projects. Two fora for collaboration among donor agencies in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) development have been established. It would be desirable to continue using these collaborative networks to avoid duplication of efforts and create more synergy. Several other organisations, including the WB, UNDP, USAID and CIDA are supporting additional MCT pilot projects and it would be of mutual benefit to share experiences and resources developed also with these projects.

Because of the cross-sectoral nature of the MCT projects, it would be highly desirable to invite also other concerned UN agencies and other organizations, including NGOs, to contribute to this Question. This would provide a solid multi-disciplinary team capable of contributing to the expected outputs.~~It would be desirable to go on taking advantage of this cooperation for more ambitious projects.~~

~~The list of countries hosting telematic projects could thus be extended by involving development partners such as FAO, UNDP and other organizations interested in the Question. This would provide a solid cross-agency team capable of undertaking a rigorous evaluation through progress reports on projects.~~

10 Other relevant information

In the light of the document "ACC Statement on Universal Access to Basic Communication and Information Services" and within the framework of the Buenos Aires Action Plan (WTDC-94), ITU has set up an integrated rural development programme, in which the concept of a multi-purpose community telecentre is a central element. An MCT pilot project was implemented within this programme in Suriname in 1996 and such pilot projects have also been recently started in Bhutan, Honduras and Vietnam. Since 1997, IDRC, ITU and UNESCO have~~since~~ worked together on the development of a ~~general~~ multi-purpose community telecentre programme for Africa project, which, initially, is being applied in five pilot projects in Africa (Benin, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda). These are being implemented over a three-year period starting in 1997/98. As most of the projects now in progress will continue as pilot projects until 2002, the ITU support will be now be provided under the Valetta Action Plan (WTDC-98), Programme No. 3 - Rural Development and Universal Access.