

PROJECT DOCUMENT

Project Title:	Knowledge networks through ICT access points for disadvantaged communities
Executing entity:	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Collaborating entities:	All United Nations Regional Commissions
Source of Funding:	Development account
Budget:	
Duration:	Thirty six months (2006 – 2009)
Objective:	To empower poor and disadvantaged communities through transforming selected existing ICT access points into knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks, providing, developing, organizing, sharing and disseminating knowledge pertinent to these communities.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main goal of the project is to empower poor and disadvantaged communities through the transformation of existing ICT access points in selected countries from various regions into knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks. Additionally, the project aims at increased engagement of target beneficiaries in disadvantaged communities (with an emphasis on women) in these knowledge networks in order to deploy relevant knowledge pertaining to key areas of sustainable development such as employment, education, gender and health.

Throughout its activities, the project stresses the link between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular Goal 8 related to the expansion of a global partnership for development.

The project will be implemented jointly with the United Nations Regional Commissions, with ESCWA as the lead organization, over a period of two years starting in 2006. Close collaboration with other relevant United Nations agencies as well as representatives of Governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations, will be maintained throughout the different phases of implementation.

2. BACKGROUND AND LINK TO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND MDGS

Access to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) applications and services and systematic knowledge sharing in disadvantaged communities and rural areas is either non-existent or very difficult. Individual and household access to ICTs remains out of reach of those disadvantaged communities¹ and in particular among women.

Communal access points have been built in different localities around the world, under different labels such as telecentres and multi-purpose communications centre. Funding agencies have shown continuing interest in initiating new projects.² Some of these centres turned into mere cyber cafés, whereas others succeeded in improving, and in some cases revolutionizing, the communities by creating an enabling environment and new opportunities for socio-economic development, such as creation of local micro-enterprises, better access to markets for local produce, and e-learning capabilities. Community access points are seen as one of the most effective tools in the realization of many socio-economic development goals.³

Those ICT access points act as vehicles for launching a number of services that focus on empowering disadvantaged communities through networking and sharing of information and relevant knowledge. The various services currently delivered are based on ICT applications needed by the communities served. This includes, in many instances, informal ICT-based training and a number of specific applications in areas such as e-health, e-business, e-government, and e-learning.

However, these ICT access points need to be re-designed differently in the form of nodes of knowledge networks while continuing to operate according to a flexible structure for supporting non-formal processes as sustainable and autonomous entities. They need to be transformed into service and community development hubs, as well as centres for exchanging business information providing sustainable sources of revenue, thus extending the model beyond the original model that only focuses on access to ICT.

This project will contribute to transforming ICT access points into knowledge hubs of a global knowledge network connecting disadvantaged communities in all regions of the world with each other and with the rest of the cyberspace. Knowledge management through access points, particularly focusing on specific applications and services and networking of these centres, are basic to their effectiveness. The involvement of both governments and grassroots NGOs in the creation and establishment of community access points is essential for their sustainability.

The UN Regional Commissions (RCs) are well placed to help in focusing support for access points on specific services and applications for local needs and linking them into knowledge networks for exchanging best practices, optimising use of resources and providing a platform for the dissemination of such services. This project, when fully piloted, will provide a model for policy makers to follow, including lessons learnt and experiences gained.

The achievement of an inclusive and sustainable information society in the developing countries and the achievement of Millennium Development Goals using ICT will greatly benefit from knowledge-based community access points. Furthermore, the project aims to achieve targets set out in the Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) adopted in Geneva in 2003. Specifically, it can provide

¹ Disadvantaged communities are understood in this project document as communities with lack of resources to live in dignity and in larger freedom. From the MDGs perspective, disadvantaged communities have individuals living with less than a dollar per day. Among others, lack of gender equality, means against HIV/AIDS or malaria, schools for children, maternal health system or employment make a disadvantaged community. Also, problems in the area of environmental sustainability do, in particular where this relates to reversing loss of environmental resources.

² One case in point is the Asian Development Bank, which has very recently approved a 1-million-dollar ESCAP project on establishing pilot community e-centres (CeC) projects in four South Asian countries, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. Another is the European Union's approval earlier this year of another ESCAP project on community ICT-based disaster management centers, which are one form of specialized access points.

³ Some governments, such as Jordan's, have embarked on projects for access points, aiming at reaching 1000 access points in the next five years. Networking of these access points, as well as knowledge building, is essential to reap socio-economic benefits. Therefore, ESCWA included in its regional plan of action for building the information society such a project along these lines. Also, ESCAP launched a focused thrust on CeC and their networking to share best practice, build capacity and demonstrate pilot applications.

sustainable models, with socio-economic benefits, for providing villages with ICTs and establishing community access points by 2015⁴.

2.1 Relationship to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

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.” More specifically, the project aims at accomplishing the following target “In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.”

Additionally, the project contributes to the other Millennium Development Goals in four priority areas, namely employment, education, gender equality and health. Development is largely a result of the application of knowledge and can be attributed to interactive learning involving government, industry, academia and civil society through the ICT access points. As a matter of fact, technological empowerment is more than installing devices; it is about imbuing society with a knowledge culture that involves valuing openness, encouraging criticism and exploration, promoting democracy, and broadening education.

Knowledge Networks will specifically focus on contributing to four other MDGs, namely:

MDG 1: The first Millennium Development Goal focuses on halving the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day and halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, both by 2015. Knowledge networks will focus on employment creation as a way to sustainably achieve these goals. ICT employment among youth will be fostered through entrepreneurship putting young people in charge of their destiny. Knowledge networks goes beyond just ICT skill acquisition, focusing on the transformation of these skills into employment leading self-sustainability for people in disadvantaged communities in four main areas: employability, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship and real employment creation.

MDG 2: The educational target within the MDGs is to “ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.” E-learning, including the application of computers and multimedia are receiving increased attention as the platforms have become more affordable in developed nations.

One of the problems of education in developing countries is that students can't dependably gain access to good teachers. Indeed, this situation exemplifies a more general problem - lacking skilled human resources, it is often the case that the person with the right skills is not present when those skills are needed. Knowledge networks will improve education by applying ICT so that people with scarce skills can technologically amplify their usefulness. They may use computing power to amplify their efforts (e.g., PC-based courseware to expand the numbers of learners that can take a class). They may also use connectivity to establish social networks and to share relevant digital content.

MDG 3: The role of women is key in development. According to “In larger freedom”, “empowered women can be some of the most effective drivers of development.” Knowledge networks will focus on what knowledge can do for gender equality and how knowledge can advance the realization of Goal 3 (education, literacy, jobs and political participation). Knowledge networks can contribute to increase primary and secondary education for girls, to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services and to provide employment in the ICT sector.

Furthermore, knowledge networks can reduce discrimination and empower women for all type of activities, since information and capacity to communicate and to enrol in decision-making processes are the basic pillars of empowerment. In Beijing words, “ICT are a powerful tool that women could use for mobilization, information exchange and empowerment”. In remote and rural areas, for example, ICT can avoid women experiencing social isolation related to their limited connectivity and infrastructure and access to training.

⁴ WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/5-E, page 2 paragraph 6

MDG 4, 5 and 6: Goal number 4 aims at reducing death rates in children under age 5. Goal number 5 target women who die during pregnancy or childbirth. Goal number 6 aims at combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. All three goals are combined as contribution to health.

Knowledge networks can improve the effectiveness of detection and prevention measures to reduce risks of particular diseases. The health care system is often conceptually divided into primary, secondary and tertiary health care. The services to well people, together with simple diagnostic and curative services, are the function of the primary care system; they are relatively simple and inexpensive, and are provided to large numbers of people. The simplicity does not imply lack of need for effectiveness – immunizations, for example, are very cost-effective means to prevent disease, and immunization programmes have reduced dramatically the morbidity and mortality from polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, and other infectious diseases in many countries.

MDG 7: Goal number 7 aims at ensuring environmental sustainability. It will be addressed in the project, in particular where this relates to reversing loss of environmental resources and the creation of new employment opportunities for community and SME engaged in resource management. In some RCs, the effect of disasters and disaster risk reduction will also be addressed as an additional function of the knowledge hub.⁵

2.2 Relationship to Strategic Framework 2006-07 of RCs

The project will contribute to:

- ESCWA sub-programme “Information and communication technology for regional integration”, expected accomplishment “Activated partnership for implementing ICT projects to achieve socio-economic development, with particular emphasis on the Millennium Development Goals.”
- ESCAP sub-programme “Information, communication and space technologies”, expected accomplishment “Increasing national capacity in ICT applications.”
- ECA sub-programme “Harnessing information for development”, expected accomplishment “Improved availability and use of information for development at the national regional and sub-regional levels.”
- ECE programme “Knowledge-based economy” and ECE sub-programme “Digital economy development”, expected accomplishment “Improved understanding and dialogue on the knowledge-based development of countries with economies in transition”.
- ECLAC sub-programme “Policy and regulatory dialogue of the Alliance for the Information Society”. The Latin American and Caribbean “eLAC 2007” Action Plan, adopted in June 2005, will set forth a measurable, numeric goal for public ICT access as the major kind of connectivity for the poor of the region.

Strategic Framework 2008-2009 of all RCs include similar goals and this project will also contribute to those goals.

▪ ⁵ For example, the hub can provide information and e-learning facility on disaster preparedness and early warning to communities to respond to possible disasters. A past practice in the Asia Pacific region: following a super cyclone in 1999, information kiosks were set up in Orissa, India, under the UNDP initiative on Vulnerability Reduction and Sustainable Environment, to facilitate access to information and function as disaster information centres. Many community e-centres in the region provide weather and sea condition information as part of their functions to help farmers and fishermen.

3. PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Establishing knowledge networks through ICT access points enables to overcome the main problem that the project strives to resolve, namely “fragmented and inadequately utilized knowledge in sustainable development” (refer to figure 1). As illustrated below, the problem tree presents the causes that lead to the main problem along with the resulting effects on the disadvantaged communities as well as on the ICT access points.

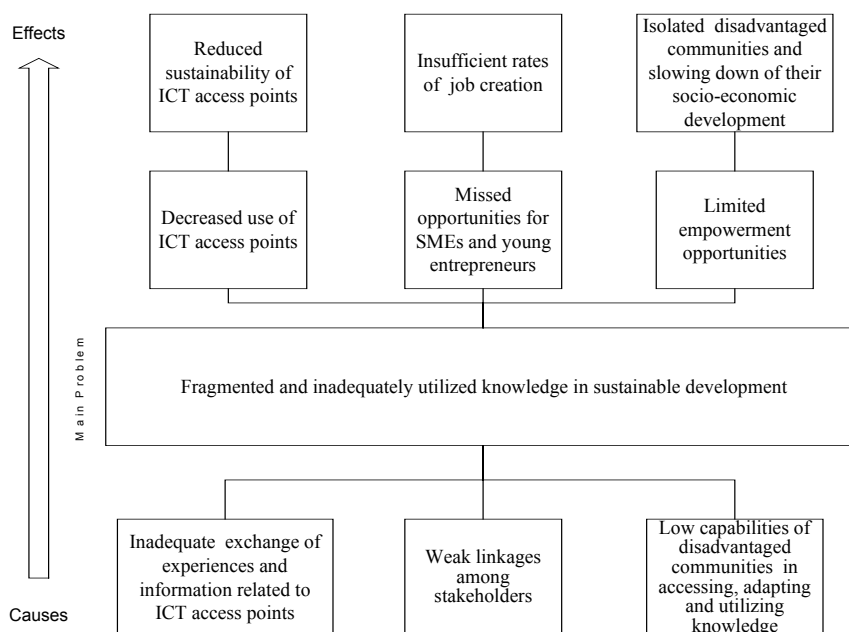
The inadequate and low exchange of information and experiences among impoverished and disadvantaged communities, with one another and with the rest of the cyberspace, is a major cause, on the medium and long term, for not updating or enriching the services delivered in the ICT access points. To that effect, demand will be reduced thus jeopardizing the sustainability of these access points to continue serving the poor and the disadvantaged.

The weak linkages among stakeholders, especially at the regional level, to effectively and efficiently serve higher market demands will result in missed opportunities for SMEs and young entrepreneurs to pool resources in order to increase productivity, competitiveness and growth, therefore job creation capabilities.

The low capabilities to access, adapt and disseminate knowledge will lead to limited empowerment capabilities of the poor and the disadvantaged, in particular women, to actively participate in the information society and knowledge-based economy; thus increasing the isolation of disadvantaged communities and slowing down their socio-economic development.

In view of the above, the knowledge networks through ICT access points are well positioned to facilitate the creation of joint value through the interaction of different perspectives and approaches as well as the exchange of experiences and information in order to support sustainable development of impoverished and disadvantaged communities. Consequently, a broader range of stakeholders, which were previously neglected or unconcerned with the ICT access points initiative, could be attracted and energized to actively participate in and benefit from this project.

Figure 1. Problem Tree



4. OBJECTIVES, EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND STRATEGY

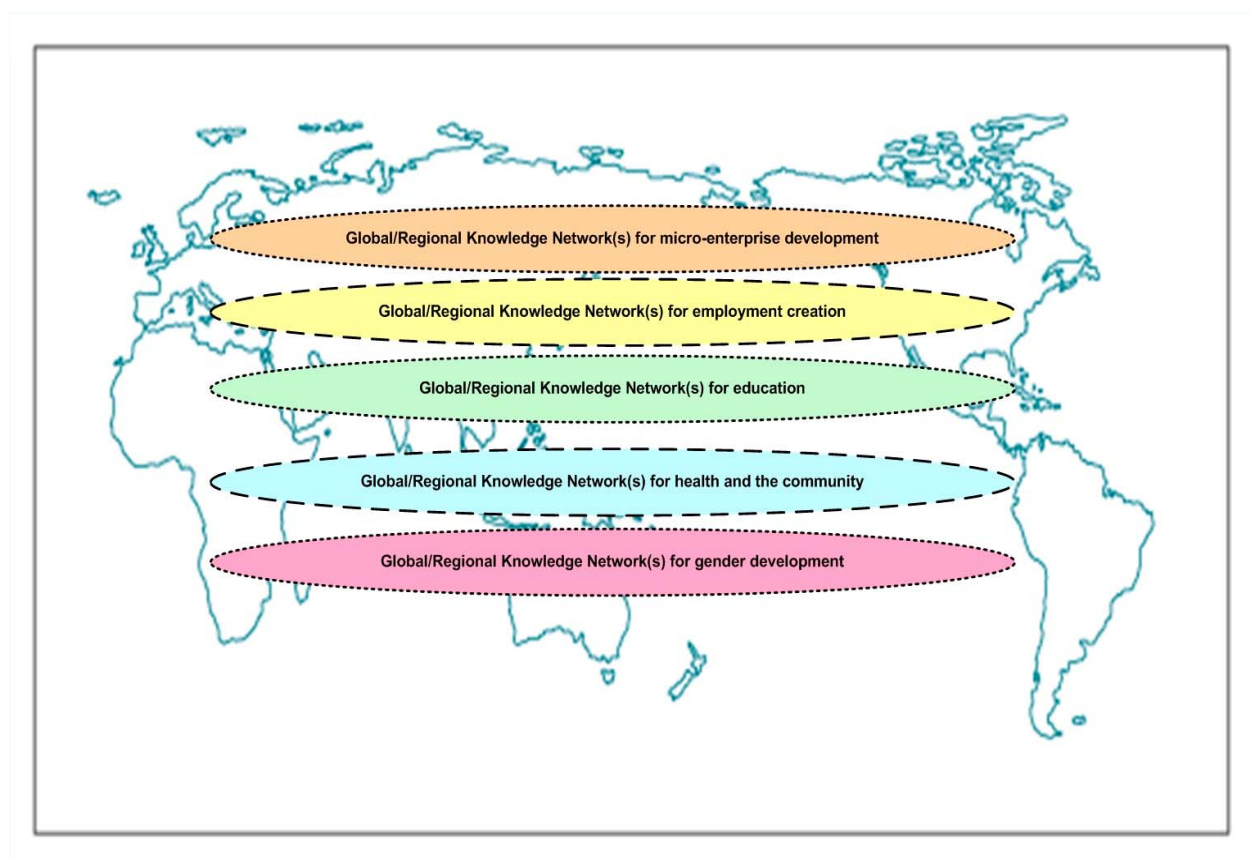
4.1 Objective:

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

4.2 Expected accomplishments:

As depicted in table 1, it is evident that the first expected accomplishment of the project (EA1) is the establishment of the global/regional knowledge network(s) in selected areas that are of priority to disadvantaged communities. Priority areas include employment, education, gender and health. Without establishing knowledge networks, sharing of knowledge and even creation thereof continues to be an unattainable goal. This task maybe considered as a sub-project on its own and involves decision-making, planning and implementation of selected networks on either a global or regional levels. Figure 2 describes five possible types of global/regional networks that may be established for every type of priority issue. Since every region has its own specificity, it may be expected that some of these knowledge networks be established on a regional level.

Figure 2. Global/Regional Knowledge Networks



ICT access points need to be re-designed in the form of knowledge nodes of knowledge networks while continuing to operate according to a flexible structure. They need to be transformed into service and

community development hubs, as well as centres for exchanging business information providing sustainable sources of revenue, thus extending the model beyond the original application-specific or multi-purpose model that mainly focuses on access to ICT. The project will contribute to transforming selected ICT access points into knowledge hubs of the established global/regional knowledge network(s) connecting disadvantaged communities in all regions of the world with each other and with the rest of the cyberspace.

The second expected accomplishment (EA2) is specifically concerned with ICT access centres in particular, transforming them from conventional access centres into smart knowledge hubs. A Knowledge Hub can be defined as a vibrant centre that is regularly accessed by beneficiaries to gain, share and organize knowledge that is very relevant to this particular community. Transforming an ICT access point into a knowledge hub process, as illustrated in figure 3, involves revitalization of ICT access points, developing new functions, networking with global networks, and activating partnerships. Since it is difficult to sustain operation of local ICT access points through selling information, it has been proved that people are willing to pay for trainings relating to the use of ICT and application for ICT for business purposes, for example. Hence, either during the establishment of a specific knowledge network or as part of the transformation process, developing new functions, it may be necessary to provide or develop specific training modules that are beneficial to targeted communities. Knowledge management through access points, particularly focusing on specific applications and services and networking of these centres, are basic to their effectiveness.

The early involvement of both governments/municipalities and grassroots NGOs in the launch of the network and the transformation of community access points into knowledge hubs is essential for their sustainability. There should be some agreed upon criteria for selection of the ICT access points to be transformed into knowledge hubs. One criterion can be the size of the targeted community, the number of existing ICT access points per country, the number of these potential hubs per country relative to its poverty, or the number of these potential hubs per global network. These criteria can be agreed upon precisely during the global meeting planned to set the framework of the whole project.

Creating knowledge networks does not automatically guarantee the creation of employment, and the improvement of health within the disadvantaged communities. The project attempts to bridge the gap between creations of the knowledge networks and project goals of empowering those communities. Hence, the project is not only concerned with transformation of ICT access centres into knowledge hubs, but furthermore, the third expected accomplishment (EA3) is concerned with engaging beneficiaries in the services and activities of these knowledge hubs as well. Those beneficiaries include individuals, women in particular, young entrepreneurs and small/micro enterprises. Success depends on the number of engaged beneficiaries, women in particular, from targeted communities.

In order to avoid a gap between knowledge networks and community development, five initiatives will be carried out: 1) strengthen of the local ICT access points in supporting content development of their services 2) enhance capacity of local ICT access point leaders; 3) provide global network of the ICT access points for possible use of the ICT for business purposes; 4) assist development of income-generating services at local ICT access points; 5) ensure support from the government.

With these three expected accomplishments, the project is able to solve the main causes of the core problem as outlined in the previous section of this document, namely “fragmented and inadequately utilized knowledge in sustainable development”.

Figure 3. Transformation of ICT access points into knowledge hubs

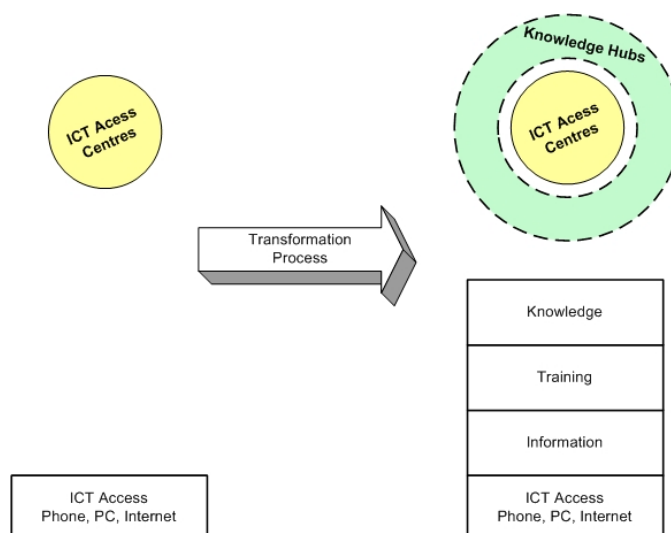


Table 1. Expected Accomplishments and Indicators of Achievements

Expected Accomplishments
Indicators of achievements
EA1: Established global/regional knowledge network(s) for community development.
IA1.1: Number of established global/regional networks for the different priority areas.
IA1.2: Number of identified value-added services based on the established knowledge networks.
IA1.3: Number of personnel actively involved in the established networks.
EA2: Enriched value proposition of ICT access points through their transformation into knowledge hubs.
IA2.1: Number of officials from governments/municipalities from participating countries involved in the launch of the Knowledge networks.
IA2.2: Number of transformed ICT access points into knowledge hubs;
IA2.3: Number of new services offered by knowledge hubs to the respective communities.
EA3: Increased engagement of beneficiaries in poor areas and disadvantaged communities in knowledge hubs.

IA3.1: Number of beneficiaries in poor areas and in disadvantaged communities engaged in the established knowledge networks.

IA3.2: Number of women in poor areas and disadvantaged communities engaged in the established knowledge networks.

IA3.3: Number of success stories resulting from established networks.

Remarks:

- Beneficiaries of the project include individuals, women in particular, young entrepreneurs and small/micro enterprises.
- Establishing knowledge networks may include establishing a network of community development actors, a dedicated portal/website, and related applications; all linked to major organizations related to ICT access centres and/or community development.
- Knowledge hubs will act as intermediary stations between the local communities on the one side and the global knowledge networks on the other. On the one hand, Knowledge hubs will be localizing knowledge gained from other peer ICT access points or other regions to fit the specificity of a certain locality, while on the other hand it will also contribute to creating knowledge by providing experiences gained from the local community to the benefit of the global networks at large.

4.3 Project strategy:

As described, the project is concerned with establishing global/regional knowledge networks and transforming selected ICT access points in selected countries into vibrant knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks related to priority areas of concern for those poor and disadvantaged communities. This process should be done in a globally coordinated fashion - and this is what distinguishes this project from other projects that aim only at enhancing ICT access points or enriching their offerings. Global coordination will be done through the cooperation of the UN regional commissions to formulate a global framework for planning and implementation of the intended transformation.

The project is not predominantly concerned with establishing new ICT access points. Creation of new ICT access points can only be done only if there is a dire need to do so, for example in order to pilot a new implementation modality for the first time. Furthermore, the project is also not primarily concerned with physical interconnectivity of ICT access points to one another, though sometimes this may be required on the level of a given geographical location, only for convenience. Alternatively, the project is mainly concerned with identifying and implementing solutions that aggregate fragmented knowledge that may be useful to different selected disadvantaged communities and those solutions that increase utilization of this aggregated knowledge.

While what can be characterized as useful knowledge may vary from one community to the other, let alone its disparity across regions, there is still common pool of knowledge for each priority area that can be shared amongst the different communities or the different regions. This is the basic foundation of the global knowledge networks to be established as a major outcome of the project.

The possible mechanism for aggregating, sharing and disseminating knowledge through ICT access points can be in the form of portals, multimedia products, or through publications/courseware. Furthermore, this can also be done through community workshops and networking events between ICT access points sharing similar interests of their respective communities.

In order to reach the project's objective of empowering target communities through enhancing the role of ICT access points as knowledge hubs of a global knowledge network, it is necessary to engage

representatives from targeted communities, women in particular in the early stages of the project, and to work with different layers of actors and to adopt the following strategies on the different levels:

At the global/regional level

- Promoting bilateral, regional and international cooperation, in particular, the 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.

At the national level

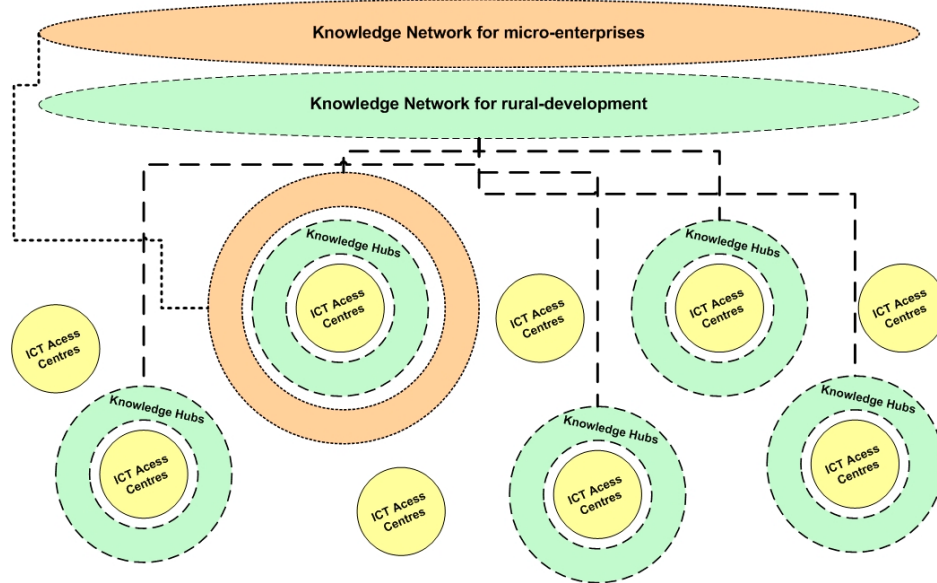
- Increasing awareness and understanding among decision-makers in governments/municipalities and NGOs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition of the potential of using ICT access points as knowledge hubs for the disadvantaged communities,
- Assisting those decision makers in governments/municipalities building indigenous capacity in policy making pertaining to disseminating knowledge networks in disadvantaged communities;

At the community level

- Revitalizing selected existing ICT access points, through enhancing its equipment, and connectivity, within the project budget;
- Possibly creating new ICT access points, wherever there is a new innovative modality that needs prototyping;
- Developing and promoting value-added services of ICT access points to increase their value-proposition to 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.
- Activating and promoting the engagement of beneficiaries at the community level in the services offered by the established knowledge hubs.
- Promoting engagement of knowledge hubs with partners from their respective communities, such as schools, hospitals ...etc.

Figure 4 describes knowledge networks with its knowledge hubs. It indicates how ICT access points become Knowledge hubs specifically when they are connected to global/regional knowledge networks, while those ICT access points that are not connected to those networks remain isolated with untapped potential. Additionally, the figure also illustrates that a transformation process is going to be carried out on selected ICT access points on a discretionary basis; i.e. not all selected hubs will be connected to all networks. While some will be connected to the global network for micro-enterprise development, for example; some others will be connected only to the global/regional network for rural development, and hence, each hub will be configured in a way that is most appropriate to its community.

Figure 4. Knowledge hubs built around ICT access centres



4.4 Project activities:

Chronologically ordered, the next activities will be carried out by the regional commissions (RCs):

A2.1. Review and assessment:

Reviews, on a regional level, aimed at compiling status of existing community ICT access points (and the communities they serve) in the different regions, identifying best practises for each priority area. The regional reviews will provide the basis for formulating the global framework in terms of identified operational models for sustainability, needed technologies, required resources, and potential partners. The assessment will also include a gender analysis of the ICT access points to make use of the opportunities and/or to avoid a possible negative impact of its use for women empowerment.

One regional commission will be required to distil the reviews and compile a report on several recommended modalities, and submitting it as an input to the global regional commissions meeting.

A 1.1. Setting a global framework and detailed implementation plan

A global regional commissions meeting is to be held to agree on the detailed implementation plan for the project, including methodology, scope, contents and modalities. Role and task distribution and responsibilities that each regional commission will assume will also be agreed to ensure optimal execution of the project. Specific criteria for selection of the ICT access points to be transformed into knowledge hubs will be agreed upon. Preparation for the meeting, including exchange of ideas and draft documents will be done through email. This meeting is to be hosted in one of the regional commissions, potentially ESCWA region, as ESCWA is the lead organization of the project..

The meeting should result in defining recommended knowledge management and networking facilities, business models for setting up knowledge hubs, and the way they will be networked with guidelines for budgeting. A structure for linking RCs, as well as Government and NGOs, to the implementation plan should be clearly spelled out to ensure sustainability. Pilot implementation of e-centres in the five regions will also be planned and budgeted for, with well-argued feasibility and sustainability.

A 1.2. Implementation of global/regional networks

Recommended knowledge management and networking facilities, tools and services, including the design and implementation of operational pilot knowledge networks, and/or the building of a global web site and resource facilities for community-based ICT access points will be implemented. Tools may be hosted in municipalities or local government premises and used for e-government applications. RCs will identify existing or new tools and will commission the customisation of these tools and their implementation (consultants and contractual services, and will also provide pilot business plans for the implementation of the knowledge hubs.

A 1.3. Launching knowledge networks amongst stakeholders

This activity is mainly about promoting the project, increasing visibility, government/municipality engagement, and political support for the newly established knowledge networks.

Launching the knowledge networks could well be organized with and sponsored by local partners and key stakeholders. For instance, it could be in the form of an event with press coverage, including coverage by the RCs associated by five regional project mobilization workshops (PMW) that would be necessary to 1) promote objective of the project; 2) engage government authorities; 3) engage multi-stakeholders (private sector, NGOs, etc.); 4) raise awareness of local communities on the potential use of the local ICT access points as knowledge hubs; 5) engage other international organizations and donors.

A 2.2. Transformation of access points into knowledge hubs

Sustainability will be ensured through stakeholder involvement, including government and NGOs. The transformation process of selected ICT access points according to the criteria defined in activity A2 will be executed by implementation partners, to be identified and supervised by RCs. Those implementation partners are essential in providing the necessary funds for the transformational activities. Transformation activities involve the following steps:

- Revitalization of the ICT access points;
- Developing new functions, including training courses and content in local language;
- Networking with established global networks;
- Engaging training of managers on financial sustainability and e-business, providing advisory services;
- Engaging beneficiaries, and activating partnerships.

A 3.1. Activating knowledge hubs and engaging beneficiaries

Organizing two or three workshops per region for selected topics (e.g. employment, small/micro enterprises, education, gender and health), in cooperation with defined implementation partners, in order to foster policy dialogue among stakeholders on building knowledge networks based on ICT access points and to develop capacity on approaches and tools in establishing and managing knowledge-oriented access points/e-centres, and training implementation partners and staff working in those access points on tools and services of the global knowledge networks pertaining to their communities.

A 1.4. Project evaluation and feedback

Organizing a global meeting to assess the project achievements and share experiences (process review, results and outcomes, good practice and lessons learned, next steps, self-evaluation). While there is an importance for organizing the global meeting, yet the evaluation and monitoring process is an ongoing process and is, therefore, a base for conducting reviews of success stories and thus measuring the overall achievement of objectives.

5. SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is the capacity to sustain a desired level of output or service for an extended period. It requires not only that all projects achieve their expected accomplishments during the project life but also that the benefits they generate continue beyond the time of the donor's involvement and continue despite technological changes. Project management will include adequate technology and financial and administrative arrangements to ensure sustainability and gradual economic self-reliance. Ensuring sustainability will be included as an important management function. The project will establish mechanisms to ensure sustainability at two levels:

- 1- Global/regional knowledge platform for community development.
- 2- Enriched value proposition for ICT access points.

Addressing real problems existing at the local levels and providing solutions that are perceived as creating value by the beneficiaries is very important to ensure that the project will continue existing after the donors finish their role. Sustainability depends on various interrelated factors, such as:

- Management and local participation
- Financing
- Technological factors
- Social and cultural values

Special importance will be given to inappropriate social and cultural values. This suggests institutional and cultural resistance to the free flow of information upon which the centres would be premised. In the UNECE region, some existing ICT centres, e.g. the OSCE Aarhus Centres, have already the experience to actively address this theme. They deliver many of the services that conceivably could be supported through the project, such as providing public access points for information on sustainable development.

Three elements will ensure sustainability of Knowledge Networks, namely partnership, governance and business plan.

5.1 Partnership

Partnership is one of the key elements that need to be decided for a successful initiative. Multi-stakeholder partnerships have proven to be very successful in mitigating risks and enhancing demand for knowledge in ICT access points. They are also the best practice to achieve capacity building at the local level as well as at the global level.

Knowledge Networks will be implemented in partnership with the following other institutions:

- Local municipalities;
- Local NGOs;
- Private sector ICT companies;
- Financial institutions;
- Education institutions;
- National governments; and
- Other international organizations.

5.2. Governance

Knowledge Networks aims at creating models to be replicated in terms of successful initiatives that proved to increase the value of ICT community centres. These models need to be alive and dynamic, changing and being enriched by latest developments, new technologies and other pilot projects.

For sustainability, proper governance schemes need to be established. Each pilot project needs to

have a steering committee and an advisory committee. The steering committee will be assigned on a voluntary basis and will aim at providing extended efforts in fund raising from donors and establishing new forms of partnership beyond the scope of the project. The advisory committee, composed of experts will provide technical assistance in the local arena; both committees will be independent of the executing structure and will provide an extended link with the original donors and other international organizations.

This governance scheme will also be replicated for the global/regional knowledge platform for community development. Steering committee and advisory committee will lead the executing team and will represent the international organizations.

5.3. Business plan

All projects will have a component that will generate benefits and incur costs. Benefits will be tangible in terms of financial returns and intangible in terms of future capacity of improvement for the beneficiaries. Costs will be partly financed by fees paid by the beneficiaries. Fees will be calculated to maximize the value to beneficiaries. However, costs and fees should be balanced to provide sustainability to the projects beyond the involvement of donors and the availability of not-to-be-returned funds.

One example of business plan is to offer advertising possibilities to local beneficiaries and accept small payments for the service. Training and thematic courses can also be paid to cover part or all the costs they incur. These cases generate cash flow by combining inputs and outputs, costs and returns.

From a financial perspective a visible and well-known global network portal has a commercial value. Transformed ICT access points will implement cost-recovery mechanism using this newly created portal (i.e. advertisement). The generated revenue will be used to sustain central operations (for hosting and updating of the portal) after the project life cycle.

In terms of training, it is important to note that people are not much willing to pay for the information. It is difficult to sustain operation of local ICT access points through selling information. However, it has been proved that people are willing to pay for trainings relating to the use of ICT and application for ICT for business purposes, for example.

To improve sustainability, managers of ICT access points will receive adequate training on business planning and advertising of their services.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

All Development Account projects are henceforth required to apply Results based Management (RBM) to their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. RBM is an enhanced project management philosophy to move from downward-driven and resource based control management systems towards collective responsibility, delegation, interaction and collective accountability.

Monitoring is essential in order to measure indicators and compare them to the expected accomplishments as established in this project document. The difference between the objectives / expected accomplishment and ACTUAL achievement will provide constant assessment of the project. The following indicators will be used for 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 personnel 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 engaged in the established knowledge networks;
- Number of success stories resulting from established networks.

As soon as the implementation phase begins, monitoring will start taking place through periodical assessments on a quarterly basis. The monitoring process will be oriented to delivery, thus fostering continuous improvement of implementation and raising quality control.

Evaluation will come also at the end of the project. It will summarize success stories and will include lessons learnt and will discuss all aspects of the whole project, and recommendations for the long term. It will require external and neutral competence and will focus on impact of what was achieved and on its quality. A final report on impact will be provided by lead entities of this project.

7. EXTERNAL FACTORS

The success of the project is contingent on the significant and sustainable involvement and contribution of the collaborating entities and other partners, as well as on cooperation of national decision makers.

8. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The project will build on existing and planned activities of participating entities (Regional Commissions) in this field, complement and further strengthen their impact through the use of innovative, primarily web-based, tools and methods. While all partners in the project may contribute to and be involved in all the activities under this project, delineation of responsibilities for implementation of specific activities will be based on comparative strengths and experiences of individual partner organizations. Broad indication of such responsibilities is presented in Table 2 below.

UN-ESCWA will spearhead the implementation and will be responsible for overall coordination of the project. A network of experts from developing countries and countries with economy in transition will be established as an integral component of the global knowledge networks. These experts may also play an active role in the implementation of the project.

Taking into account the limited amount of resources under the Development Account relative to the immensity of the task and its resource requirements, the project will forge a series of complementary and synergistic multi-stakeholder partnerships with relevant activities undertaken by donor governments, private sector companies, academic and research institutions, and civil society organizations. Broad indication of such responsibilities is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Responsibility for main activities

Main activity	Primary implementation responsibility
A 2.1. Review and assessment	All RCs, (coordinated by ESCWA)
A 1.1. Setting a global framework and detailed implementation plan	All RCs
A 1.2: Implementation of global/regional networks	Selected RC's
A 1.3. Launching knowledge networks amongst stakeholders	All RCs
A 2.2. Transformation of access points into knowledge hubs	All RCs, governments/municipalities
A 3.1. Activating knowledge hubs and engaging beneficiaries	All RCs, governments/municipalities
A 1.4. Project evaluation and feedback	ESCWA

ANNEX I. SIMPLIFIED LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Intervention logic	Indicators	Verification Source	Risks/Assumptions
Objective To develop a model for empowering poor and disadvantaged communities through transforming selected existing ICT access points into knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks, providing, developing, organizing, sharing and disseminating knowledge pertinent to these communities.			
Intervention logic	Indicators	Verification Source	Risks/Assumptions
Expected accomplishment 1 Established global/regional knowledge network(s) for community development.	IA1.1: Number of established global/regional networks for the different priority areas. IA1.2: Number of identified value-added services based on the established knowledge networks. IA1.3: Number of personnel actively involved in the established networks.	1. Surveys with involved users, with experts and with final beneficiaries will be conducted. 2. Web logs will be extracted from daily functioning of the Internet based applications that will be ad-hoc developed and put into production. Forums, repositories, news and links will be exceptional source for relevant data.	- Political instability; - Unacceptability of certain models for certain ICT access points - Lack of skilled management and/or local participation - Lack of on time financing - Technological factors - Inappropriate social and cultural values
1.1 Main activity Setting a global framework and detailed implementation plan*			
1.2 Main activity Implementation of global/regional networks*			
1.3 Main activity Launching knowledge networks amongst stakeholders*			
1.4 Main activity Project evaluation and feedback*			
Intervention logic	Indicators	Verification Source	Risks/Assumptions
Expected accomplishment 2 Enriched value proposition of ICT access points through their transformation into knowledge hubs.	IA2.1: Number of officials from governments/municipalities from participating countries involved in the launch of the Knowledge networks. IA2.2: Number of transformed ICT access points into knowledge hubs; IA2.3: Number of new services offered by knowledge hubs to the respective communities.	1. Surveys with beneficiaries, experts in socioeconomic development, local leaders,, trainers and supervisors in pilot facilities will be conducted. 2. Counting new ICT access points and enumerating new different services.	- Political instability; - Unacceptability of certain models for certain ICT access points - Lack of skilled management and/or local participation - Lack of on time financing - Technological factors - Inappropriate social and cultural values
2.1 Main activity Review and assessment*			
2.2 Main activity Transformation of access points into knowledge hubs*			
Intervention logic	Indicators	Verification Source	Risks/Assumptions
Expected accomplishment 3 Increased engagement of	IA3.1: Number of beneficiaries in	1. Qualitative surveys with	- Political instability;

beneficiaries in poor areas and disadvantaged communities in knowledge hubs.	poor areas and in disadvantaged communities engaged in the established knowledge networks. IA3.2: Number of women in poor areas and disadvantaged communities engaged in the established knowledge networks. IA3.3: Number of success stories resulting from established networks.	involved final beneficiaries will be conducted. 2. Success stories will be reported as they occur.	- Unacceptability of certain models for certain ICT access points - Lack of skilled management and/or local participation - Inappropriate social and cultural values
3.1Main activity			
Activating knowledge hubs and engaging beneficiaries*			
* For full description of this activities, please refer to section 4.4			

ANNEX II. RESULT BASED WORK PLAN

Expected accomplishment	Main Activities	Timeframe by output/activity			
		2006	2007	2008	2009
EA1: Established global/regional knowledge network(s) for community development.	A 1.1: Setting a global framework and detailed implementation plan	X			
	A 1.2: Implementation of global/regional networks	X	X	X	X
	A 1.3: Launching knowledge networks amongst stakeholders	X			
	A 1.4: Project evaluation and feedback				X
EA2: Enriched value proposition of ICT access points through their transformation into knowledge hubs.	A 2.1: Review and assessment:	X			
	A2.2: Transformation of access points into knowledge hubs		X	X	X
EA3: Increased engagement of beneficiaries in poor areas and disadvantaged communities in knowledge hubs.	A 3.1: Activating knowledge hubs and engaging beneficiaries		X	X	X