Appendix 1

Evaluation and Learning System for Acacia (ELSA–Acacia)[1]

Acacia's basic assumption is that by using ICTs, poor communities in Africa can contribute more efficiently to their own development and avoid or go rapidly through the traditional stages of the development process. This hypothesis is tested under the Acacia project activity.

Learning and experimentation are important characteristics of the Acacia approach to development and to the adoption of ICTs in developing communities. This approach is reflected in the very design of the initiative, in its participatory strategy as well as in the integration of evaluation and learning in all stages of project implementation. Therefore, the evaluation component of the Acacia initiative goes beyond assessing the objectives and results achieved. It is an evaluation approach that combines continuous learning and experimentation within its analysis. It is essential that changes that occur be based on lessons drawn, either from within the Initiative per se, from that of Acacia partners or from the development context as a whole.

The key learning mechanisms include self-evaluations and the partners to the Initiative, the participants and project staff working in harmony to determine learning objectives and to work out a common understanding of the results achieved under an Acacia activity. This implies setting up feedback mechanisms, allocating resources to guide and train participants and exchange opportunities between the different partners to the initiative.

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[1] Source: http://network.idrc.ca/ev.php?url_id=5906&do=do_topic

The formulae adopted by the Evaluation and Learning System for Acacia (ELSA) is innovative per se as it covers persistent learning and evaluation as well as new knowledge and what is imbibed is transmitted both to Acacia managers and to the communities directly.

Exchanges with the main Acacia partners constitute an integral part of ELSA, so that their own views on the criteria for an effective approach and the standard to report the progress and results achieved could be incorporated in the permanent learning and evaluation framework. The Acacia program will, as much as possible, facilitate ELSA's work through electronic connectivity. Paving the way, IDRC has published on its web site the reports and studies related to each of the phases of the Initiative. Furthermore, the "Exchanges with Acacia" section was created in an initial effort to stimulate information flows to the Initiative thus encouraging a two-way interaction.

Evaluation and learning take place at all levels of the Acacia Initiative and this is so not only to be able to assess the impact of Acacia on community life or the relevance, efficiency and visibility of its various projects and programs, but also to understand the role and effects of ICTs on project behaviour (and project participants') and on the achievement of project objectives. For further details on the impact of ICTs on development aid, check out the site Learning and Action Program (GK–LEAP) web site run by Bellanet, one of Acacia's partners.

The ELSA approach consists of four integrated components:

1. Project evaluations aimed at collecting reference data and assessing programs in accordance with the needs of IDRC and other parties to the Initiative.
2. Use of innovating ICT mechanisms and tools to promote learning and feedback at all levels.
3. Research to test hypotheses derived from knowledge acquired through the Acacia Initiative.
4. Exchanges at all levels between parties to the Acacia Initiative to ensure that lessons derived from projects are disseminated, adapted, and then fed back into the program activity and implementation.

Appendix 2

Description of Projects

1. A Community-Based Electronic Environmental Network in the Msunduzi River Catchment[2]

The Msunduzi River catchment covers an area of 540 km^2 and contains over 500,000 people, 400,000 of whom live in the urban and peri-urban area of Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi. The balance live predominantly in the rural area of Vulindlela which forms the upper catchment. A great many of the people living in the catchment come from disadvantaged backgrounds, are poorly educated, and have limited understanding of environmental and development issues. This, combined with inappropriate development and land use by administrative and management authorities and commercial and industrial interests, has caused a significant decline in the environmental health of the catchment. The poor environmental health contributes towards social instability, and also apathy towards the environment. Conversely, good environmental health can contribute towards a sense of belonging, community pride and social stability, as well as reducing community health problems.

Together with the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), Umgeni Water had earlier embarked on the Mgeni Catchment Management Plan of which the Msunduzi Catchment forms a part. This initiative identified

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[2] Extract from 'A Community-Based Electronic Environmental Network in the Msunduzi River Catchment: A Review and a Model.' Paper Prepared for the Acacia Project by Nick Rivers-More and Duncan Hay, Institute of Natural Resources, August 1998.

the following key issues in the Msunduzi Catchment (related to water quality and quantity):

- High levels of faecal contamination indicating that water supply and sanitation systems (including educational systems) are inadequate.
- High levels of sediment entering storage dams indicating high rates of soil erosion caused by inappropriate land use and civil engineering practices.
- High levels of phosphorous caused by industrial discharge and run-off from cultivated land.
- Metal contamination caused mainly by industry and motor vehicles.
- Aquatic health declining because of the invasion of alien riparian (riverine) vegetation, pollution and natural habitat destruction.
- Flooding periodically accounting for a number of lives and livelihoods.

A short walk in the Azalea area of Greater Edendale is sufficient to bring into stark reality the problems people face. Gashes of soil erosion caused by over-grazing; external pit latrines oozing raw sewerage into adjacent streams; smashed standpipes spewing thousands of gallons of water into storm-water drains; formal homes constructed within flood risk areas, or directly in wetlands and stream-beds; cuts and fills of a construction site with no rehabilitating vegetation covering them; litter in all conceivable forms strewn along the riverbanks; and of greatest concern, the number of people unemployed and at home.

One of the keys to addressing these issues is improving the understanding of those whose actions impact on the environment – not only the poor but also industrialists, developers and city administrators. A lack of knowledge on relevant issues can lead to poor environmental health and/or an inability to rectify the problem. Conversely, information "overload" can be overwhelming without the necessary guidance on how to filter out the relevant information in order to use the knowledge to improve environmental quality. People from all socio-economic sectors need to understand the consequences of their actions. Only through this will people modify their behaviour towards the environment. The basis for improved understanding is access to information and increased interaction between and within socio-economic levels and sectors. (The Greater Edendale Environmental Network and the Institute of Natural Resources held a community-based workshop

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with about 50 participants in Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi recently. The objective was to introduce community leaders to the concept of Integrated Catchment Management and to establish a common vision for the catchment. The community leaders cited a lack of information as one of the major constraints to effective environmental management of the catchment.) For the vast majority of people, gaining access to information and interacting through formal education on environment and development issues is not a realistic option. Gaining knowledge and understanding that allows people to make informed decisions on their lives and the environment has to take a different and less formal route. "Local–Local" dialogue–interaction and the exchange of information – between community groups, between community groups and experts, and between community groups, NGOs and government (local, provincial and national) – is essential so that different perspectives are understood and all parties are empowered to take decisions and act effectively.

The historical roots of this programme go back to 25 December 1995, where the need for improved information management and communication in a catchment context was spurred by the floods of Christmas Day 1995. This flood devastated areas of the catchment, killed 160 people and displaced over 500 families. All of these people were settled in flood risk areas. This disaster illustrated graphically to what extent marginalized and disadvantaged people have been separated from environmental processes. A general lack of comprehension and understanding of the danger of settling on floodplains, a lack of opportunities to settle elsewhere, a deteriorating catchment and an episodic rainfall event formed a highly lethal combination. While a project was initiated to provide short-term solutions to the flooding – simply to identify those living in areas of extreme risk and move them – there was the general recognition that a more holistic catchment management approach was required, in order to solve the multifaceted problems that exist in the catchment. With funds donated by the GTZ Rural Development Foundation, four organizations teamed up to commence the Msunduzi Integrated Catchment Management Initiative. They were:

- Institute of Natural Resources (INR)
- Greater Edendale Environmental Network (GREEN)
- Computing Centre for Water Research (CCWR)
- Share-Net

Activities in this initiative included:

- Establishing a conceptual and contextual basis for achieving sustainable development in the Msunduzi Catchment.
- Compiling a data base of catchment stakeholders.
- Setting up a catchment management "leadership group."
- Developing a common vision amongst stakeholders of what the desired state of the catchment might be and how this might be achieved.
- Being actively involved in community-based initiatives so as to achieve an improved understanding of catchment based problems.
- Formulating of information management and education strategies.
- Developing, through these initiatives, an Integrated Catchment Management strategy for the whole catchment.

In investigating this approach the critical role of communication and effective information transfer became apparent. The opinion was expressed that if disadvantaged communities gained access to catchment-based information relevant to their lives and livelihoods it would place them in a better position to respond. One way of creating, sharing and accessing information is through the Internet. There is general agreement that for any catchment-based activity to be successful effective communication and co-creation of information is vitally critical. The sharing of information, and co-ordination of actions based on that information between and within sectors and levels of society, is also important. A specific issue is access to relevant information by, and effective communication with, organisations that represent the various communities resident in the catchment. So as to address this, the INR, with technical and conceptual support from the CCWR, commenced with a pilot project in establishing three electronic communication and information centres within or linked to communities, and operated by a community-based organization:

- Indumiso Environmental Awareness Society (IEAS);
- Greater Edendale Environmental Network (GREEN); and
- Sobantu Environmental Desk.

Success was mixed, but progress has been made in the following areas:

- Training in computer skills and electronic networking is taking place.
- IEAS and GREEN have established their own web sites.
- GREEN has compiled its own newsletter located on the home page and also distributed it as hardcopy to community representatives.
- Both groups are interacting regularly with institutions and accessing information off the Internet.
- Feedback from the various activities that the groups carry out in the catchment area is also fed into their web sites.
- Sections of the computer-based Integrated Catchment Information System (ICIS) have been loaded on to the IEAS computer and members are inputting and manipulating data collected on field trips.
- Establishment of the Sobantu site has commenced.

There is a fundamental need to increase the number of sites and to encourage other initiatives/organizations to fund their own sites so as to increase the flow of information to and from community groups and to improve communication. There is also a need to formulate, test and refine a communication and information-sharing model for broad catchment-based application. This is where this project is relevant, in that it aims to increase the number of sites from where knowledge sharing can take place. Although the project is aimed at the residents of peri-urban and urban areas it is important to include also those rural residents in the upper catchment. Their activities impact on the urban environment downstream and so their participation in the project process is critical.

Project goal and objectives

The goal of this project was to improve decision making through effective communication and information management on environment and development issues among communities and institutions in the Msunduzi River catchment. The specific project objectives were as follow:

1. Review the international, national and local experiences of community-based communication and information systems.

2. Expand community-based electronic network in the Msunduzi River Catchment (from three to eight hubs) and operate effectively as a medium for improving environmental decision-making.
3. Establish GREEN as an effective central hub in the electronic network.
4. Train representatives of participating organizations to be computer literate and to able to effectively network electronically.
5. Make representatives of participating organizations aware of environmental and development issues and their consequences and able to jointly take decisions to resolve these issues.
6. Support representatives of participating organizations in transferring their understanding of environment and development issues to the broader community.
7. Ensure that information on environment and development issues in the Msunduzi River catchment are consolidated, accessible and understandable to communities.
8. Formulate, test and validate electronic information and communication model that focuses on community groups, which can be applied broadly at local and regional level and that informs a national strategy.
9. Evaluate the project effectively.
10. Plan, develop and fund ongoing networking activities.

2. Enhancing women's participation in governance through increased access to civic information

This project, which commenced in 1998, is being implemented by the Family Support Institute, (FASI) Kenya. FASI is a local NGO working in rural communities in parts of the country and especially with women on family health issues. FASI identified two centres for the implementation and operation of the project, namely: Shibuye location in Kakamega District, Western province and Nguumo location in Makueni District of the Eastern Province.

The main objective of the project is to build on existing infrastructure in community-based resource centres, to provide women from the two rural communities of Kakamega and Makueni with the ability to access, generate and utilize civic information to enhance their participation in governance. The resource centres were to be used to perform functions similar to those of telecentres.

It is expected that through this project, women's awareness of their civic rights and responsibilities in the project locations at least will be heightened and a pool of informed women who can intelligently participate in the electoral process created. Accountability and transparency, constituents of good governance, will be deepened among women through their involvement in continuous civic education programmes provided within the project using ICTs.

It is also expected that at the conclusion of this project, women's capacity to participate in political decision-making and especially in matters related to their development would have improved. This would have been made possible through the use of ICTs in the expansion and upgrading of their traditional information systems and networks.

Specific objectives

- To increase women's awareness of their civic rights and responsibilities
- Increase the pool of informed women who can participate in the electoral process as candidates and voters.
- Increase women's representation in decision-making positions in public and private sectors.
- Increase control of the electoral process by community members and promote the principles of free and fair elections.
- Create awareness of the virtues of accountability, transparency and good governance.
- Improve community women's capacity for decision-making relating to development by increasing their access to Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), and their ability to use them for their own needs
- Create increased opportunities for communities to update their information on governance.
- Provide increased opportunities for communities to use ICTs to upgrade their traditional information systems and networks.

Project activities

The activities of the project and the resource or telecentres were identified as follows:

- Undertaking needs assessment in the project target districts to determine

the status of civic information resources and information and communication technologies.

- Convening a consultative meeting for stakeholders to review and share information on existing civic materials and information and communication technology resources, assess their adequacy, identify gaps and develop an action plan.
- Generating additional civic education materials and secure information and communication technologies and establish a training programme responding to the identified needs.
- Establishing resource centres in both project areas equipped with comprehensive civic educational materials and information and communication technologies and training programmes.
- Recruiting resource people skilled in information and communication technologies, retainers skilled in management of community resource centres and women group leaders from communities in the target areas to participate in the project.
- Providing training for retainers, and volunteer trainers who will be women group leaders in the management and use of community-based information centres and information and communication technologies.
- Training women group members from the local communities in civic education and management and use of community-based information centres and information and communication technologies.
- Organizing exchange tours between women from different areas to share information.

3. Economic empowerment of women through ICTs

This Acacia project in Uganda is supported by IDRC as a pilot initiative in the country aimed at empowering poor rural communities to improve their socio-economic conditions and acquire capacity to address their local needs through the use of modern ICTs. This project is intended to maximize the use of telecentre projects through establishing complementary applications useful to rural community needs such as telemedicine, electronic delivery of agricultural information and equipping women entrepreneurs with information and skills.

Background

The Council for the Economic Empowerment of Women of Africa (CEEWA) – Uganda Chapter is a non-profit organization that was set up with the explicit objective of promoting the economic empowerment of women in the development process. In order to address women's concerns, CEEWA-Uganda has adopted a number of strategies, which include:

• Training and sensitisation.
• Research and documentation.
• Lobbying for participation in relevant technical committees and task forces commissioned by mainstream economy-related organizations.
• Participation in collaborative lobbying and advocacy initiatives with other NGOs.

In implementing the above strategies, CEEWA-Uganda has put in place four major programmes, namely:
• Women and Economic Decision-Making. This programme brings together women professionals in various multidisciplinary fields to work as a group in mainstreaming women's concerns in the economic development process.
• Women and Finance. This programme aims at strengthening and enhancing gender equity in micro-finance initiatives.
• Resource Centre Project. The overall objective of this programme is to strengthen and enhance the use of information and communication technologies by women and their organizations.
• Women and Agriculture. The primary objective of this programme is to support Government and NGOs in developing agricultural extension services deliverable in a gender responsive manner.

Project objectives

In line with its overall goal – of increasing women's access to and control of economic resources – CEEWA-Uganda is implementing a 2-year project that puts special focus on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to promote the growth and development of women enterprises. The overall objective of the project is to enable women entrepreneurs and women's organisations that promote enterprise development

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to explore ways and means of exploiting ICTs for community economic empowerment. The project specifically:

- Identify the information needs of micro- and small-scale women entrepreneurs and women organizations in three project sites of Buwama, Nabweru, and Kampala.
- Build human resource capacity, among participating women entrepreneurs and women organisations, through training in entrepreneurship development and ICT application in entrepreneurship.
- Establish a Women Information Resource and Electronic Services (WIRES) centre that will enable women entrepreneurs to access information relevant to the development of their entrepreneurial skills and the expansion of their existing enterprises.
- Monitor, evaluate, and document the performance of the participating women entrepreneurs and women organizations, and to disseminate the knowledge generated.

4. African Highlands Eco-Regional Program (AHI)

African Highlands Eco-Regional Program (AHI) is a collaborative research program focusing on natural resource management (NRM) in the highlands of East and Central Africa. The project aims at strengthening agricultural research in East and Central Africa, and contributing to the development of communities vis-à-vis sustainable use of natural resources through usage and application of ICTs and other communication approaches in the community. It is envisaged that the ICTs and new approaches will enable farmers to access relevant information from agricultural researchers, extension workers, traders and support agents.

The goal of this project was to contribute to development of communities and the sustainability of natural resources in the intensively cultivated highlands of Eastern Africa through the application and management of ICTs and traditional communication media. The overall purpose of the project was to help farmers increase their knowledge and understanding of technological options in order to make better decisions at household and community levels so that they can produce and market effectively and sustainably skills in NRM.

Project objectives

- Increase farmers and stakeholders technological and market (and other) knowledge and understanding in the use of ICTs so that they can produce and market effectively.
- Motivate and create a capacity of communities to apply and utilize ICTs to meet their expressed needs with respect to production and marketing information.
- Set-up, support the development of the telecentre network and identify the most effective combination of ICTs, which can be applied to enhance farmers' knowledge and skills in NRM and ensure the sustainability of the network.
- Understand the communication process and dynamics in the target communities and assess the factors (positive and negative) affecting the utilization of ICTs for development.

5. Experimentation with Youth Cyber spaces in Intermediate and Secondary Education in Senegal

Senegal is a Sahelian country with a high population growth rate (2.7% annually compared with 0.9% annually in Canada) and a severely deteriorating environment. Its population doubled within 25 years with a very important youth component. About 58% of the population is less than 20 years of age compared with only 5% of elderly people (60 years and above). In a context of premature sexuality, this segment is most vulnerable to the consequences of fecundity and to the progression of AIDS. Surveys on youth sexuality revealed that more than 50% of young school goers experienced sex with no information whatsoever on related risks.

One must confess that the structures involved in advocating for the promotion of reproductive health, the improvement of the environment in which the young mature, and better management of their economic and social development have not seriously consider young people. As part of efforts to find solutions to these problems, GEEP in partnership with the Ministry of National Education, has embarked on a teenage education program designed to inform on problems and issues around population. In this connection, a program on the promotion of training in family life and

environmental issues was set up for intermediate and secondary education in Senegal. Its goal was to raise awareness among the youth and to influence their behavioural changes in matters relating to sexual and reproductive health issues.

The target group are (13 and 12 years) pupils and teachers of intermediate and secondary education. GEEP's strategy was to establish Family Life Education (FLE) clubs in these schools to serve as a communication space where there is a permanent dialogue about teenagers' concerns on reproductive health, environment and sustainable development. The number of FLE clubs in schools and universities both in urban and rural areas increased from 73 in July 1996 to 130 in March 1998. The network consists of 1,500 *leaders-pupils-coordinators (LPC)* and 500 *teachers-relays-techniques (TRT)*.

Family Life Education (FLE) clubs are expanding in a context characterized by very strong demand for information, experience sharing and contacts among young people. On the other hand, the growing number of clubs and their dispersion over a vast geographic area make communication increasingly difficult between the GEEP executive team based in Dakar and the FLE clubs. In order to improve this situation, it became clear that it was useful to experiment with the use of ICTs during the second FLE club festival on the theme 'FLE clubs at the Dawn of the twenty-first century,' through the establishment of a youth cyber space with the participation of pupils who demonstrated great innovating and ICT appropriation capacities.

Following the positive results achieved through this experiment, it was recommended that youth cyber spaces are created to assist in improving the learning, facilitation and communication model. A dozen of youth cyber spaces was thus tested nationally through the club network. This process will help to capitalize and develop their achievements, to promote the distant use of the interdisciplinary population teaching model, to assess the impacts of introducing ICTs in club activities to a wider section of the community, and to consolidate information sharing between the clubs, on the one hand, and with Canada 2/3 Youth Club on the other.

Overall objective

Experimentation provides for improving the learning, facilitation and awareness model implemented by FLE clubs and to apply it on population, environmental and sustainable development issues through the introduc-

tion of ICTs and the use of youth cyber spaces in intermediate and secondary education in Senegal.

Specific objectives

- to establish twelve (12) youth cyber spaces in the national FLE club network in Senegal;
- to enhance and to capitalize FLE clubs' achievement and to establish an information sharing network between the FLE clubs network and Canada 2/3 Youth;
- to develop the community exposure capacities of FLE clubs;
- to promote the distant use of the interdisciplinary population teaching model; and
- to assess the impact of access to ICTs through FLE club activity and the higher school performance of the pupils.

6. Use and appropriation of new Information and Communication Technologies by community organizations in Senegal

With poverty spreading as a result of the combination of several internal and external factors linked to structural adjustment policies and State withdrawal, popular dynamics are getting organized in urban and suburban areas around such objectives as would improve and help manage the increasingly difficult living conditions of various underprivileged groups. By developing the so-called popular economy, these organizations are becoming gradually autonomous and willing to build their strategic and operational capacities so that they will be able to influence the course of events and be directly involved in matters relating them.

However, the absence of community organizations from standard communication channels limits considerably the scope and impacts of their development actions, which are confined locally and for a fixed period. For this reason, these organizations have been developing communication strategies and have started gradually, in some cases, to take advantage of the resources and opportunities offered by new ICTs.

With this project aimed at reinforcing popular dynamics, a formative research-action methodology is implemented in order to enable the organizations concerned to use these technologies and to appropriate them durably and socially over a network of community resource centres run by them.

Overall objective

Project objective is to build the operational and strategic capacities of community organizations by using and appropriating ICTs through a coordinated network of community resource centres run by groups of local actors.

Specific objectives

- making local actors participate effectively through a research-action-training process (RAT) at all stages of programming, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of actions related to the use and appropriation of ICTs by these groups;
- building capacities within Ecopole to manage the network and provide technical assistance to local actors;
- building technical skills within community groups participating in RAT;
- identifying and developing communal economy resources held by the groups;
- experimenting with community resources centres in eight sites located in extremely poor urban and suburban areas in Dakar;
- undertaking a participatory evaluation of the process, tools and results achieved in order to assess their real impact on the capacities of target community organizations.

7. Introduction of ICTs to the management and rehabilitation of village communities

The region of Tambacounda extends over an area representing one-third of the Senegalese territory and is endowed with significant pastoral, hydro-agricultural, forestry and mining potentials. Because of the quality and spread

of its land area and relatively good rainfall, the region offers an alternative area for intensive agriculture and a migration route from the now over-cultivated groundnut basin whose productivity is decreasing. Despite the region's potentials, grassroots communities experience an extremely fragile economic, sanitary and social situation, making the region one of the poorest in the country.

Land-locked villages and their extreme dispersion make things worse for a region which is already short of communications infrastructures, in particular, considerably raising the costs of development programmes, with negative repercussions on economic activities including market access for products on fairly attractive conditions. In order to remedy this situation, WARF (West Africa Rural Foundation) has assisted since 1993 GADEC (Groupe d'Action pour le Développement Communautaire) in defining and implementing a program on village soil management and rehabilitation (PRGTV). GTV's strategy is based on a comprehensive and collective approach to the constraints and opportunities specific to a rural area aiming at a sustainable management of its local resources and basing its interventions on dialogue between all parties, analysing the complexity of and inter-actions between natural and socio-political phenomena and integration of development activities.

The development challenges faced by the region include, to a large extent, giving the rural populations and their elect access to means of infor-mation and communication. In fact, the geographic configuration of local villages and weak or non-existent public and private mass media in some places (radio, in particular) have induced processes preventing grassroots communities from consolidating their autonomy, acquiring knowledge, interacting with political authorities and other development partners or developing their external trade relations.

For all these reasons, the region of Tambacounda is an exceptional socio-geographic framework for experimenting, validating or reformulating Acacia basic hypotheses on grassroots community's access to ICTs as one way of ensuring their own development. It is in this framework that WARF and GADEC offered to experiment Acacia strategy in the context of village soil management. The idea is to lead actions encouraging the use of ICTs and to evaluate its impact on the state and modes of managing village resources, and more generally, on the economic and socio-educational activities of the rural populations while also validating parameters in terms of innovation

acceptability and appropriation by the different actors. The approach will be based on the participatory development methodologies of the technologies and include training activity and production of tools that actors involved in the implementation of Acacia strategy in Senegal can use.

Overall objective

To lead activities encouraging the use of ICTs and assessing its impacts on the state and modes of managing village resources, on the economic and socio-educational activities of the populations while also validating parameters in terms of innovation acceptability and appropriation by the different actors.

Specific objectives

- **Focus 1:** to carry out participatory studies/analyses on community information and communication system in three village sites covered by the VCMR/DG program; and
- to work out a pattern for these information and communication systems in relation to the State and to the mode of managing village resources.
- **Focus 2:** to identify and to choose collectively the technological solutions likely to lift the information and communication constraints faced by the local populations; and
- to analyse and to assess the impact resulting from the introduction of these technologies on the state and modes of managing villages resources.
- **Focus 3:** to analyse the various political, economic, social and cultural parameters likely to influence the process of introducing the technologies and to evaluate their relative importance in observed changes;and
- to devise and propose a method of establishing the concepts on information and communication systems combining a range of technologies (new, classical and traditional) adapted to rural needs and situation.
- **Focus 4:** to initiate about thirty members of the consultative framework put in place under the Acacia project to participatory concepts and tools for: a diagnosis of a community information and communication system in a rural environment; negotiated and planned introduction of ICTs in rural communities; and evaluation of community projects and programs.

Expected results

Based on the basic problem defined under the Acacia project, that is the access of grassroots communities to ICTs, the global results expected from the project inlude the following:

- explaining a range of phenomena linked to the processes of introducing ICTs in the programming framework of village resource management;
- defining a community information and communication system (CIC) concept conceived on the basis of technologies combining appropriate traditional and modern resources adapted to the rural situation;
- producing and disseminating methodological guides, manuals, articles and audiovisual materials informing on experimentation areas and stages. At the same time, the Acacia-GTV project, in accordance with the orientations defined under the transversal consultation mechanism set up by Acacia, proposes to partners learning experience of participatory methodology with rural communities;
- initiating about thirty members of the Acacia consultative framework to participatory methodologies for studies/diagnosis on the constraints and negotiation of development program with rural communities.

8. ICTs and decentralization of Trade Point (TPS) Senegal

In the globalized economy era, largely spurred by the unprecedented development of ICTs, competitiveness becomes a fundamental stake for country growth. It is in this context that the Senegal IX Orientation Plan for Economic and Social Development (1996-2001), stressed both competitiveness and sustainable human development aims to achieving high growth rates while preserving development capacities.

But like the majority of the countries in the sub-region, Senegal has long been protected against international competition through protectionist policies. The current dynamics of the world economy are forcing the country to reinforce competition in its national economy and to develop co-operation with its foreign partners. Accordingly, it must continue to liberalise, to deregulate, to open up its borders and to restructure its production system.

As the national environment plays a central role in competitiveness, its analysis revealed that many factors currently hinder the creation of comparative advantages. These factors include excess regulation of trade procedures, spatial imbalance between Dakar and the provinces, scattered sources of information and information unreliability. This is why national economy actors seized the opportunities afforded by the UNCTAD program on trade efficiency to join the world Trade Points network, which offer various services through ICTs to users (procedure facilitation centre, access point to world trade information and guidance and assistance centre for trade efficiency).

The self-assigned mission of Trade Point Senegal is to promote Senegalese exports, to rationalize imports and to attract foreign investors. This mission is particularly relevant if it covers Senegal as a whole. The Trade Point decentralization project was initiated from this perspective.

The mission assigned to decentralization is to implement policy giving local economic units access to TPS products and services so that they can take maximum useful advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization. This requires establishing on a large-scale a network of community units endowed with the new ICTs at four levels:

1. regional units located at the different levels of local authorities: regions, districts and rural communities;
2. registered telecentres in each region that will would bring the neighbourhood closer together by allowing access to TPS services even to the places of residence entrepreneurs;
3. transmission points based near the headquarters of socio-professional organizations; and
4. international units lodged with Senegal diplomatic missions.

The establishment of this network is expected to boost domestic trade, to improve trade balance, to attract foreign investors, and to popularize the use of the new ICTs.

Overall objective

To experiment decentralization of the services provided by Trade Point Senegal to economic units operating in places outside Dakar, the capital,

by using ICTs through a network of community units found at different levels of the local authorities, in two regions of the country.

Specific objectives

- to identify and select pilot sites to host community units;
- to make a participatory diagnosis of the socio-economic context of pilot sites and to identify the needs and expectations of local economic units;
- to determine the configuration and functions of community units so as to test their operational modes in different local contexts;
- to draw up a strategy and a plan for ensuring the viability of community units;
- to evaluate the experimental phase with a view to extending community units to other sites across the country;
- to extend decentralization to other regions.

Expected results

- making rural populations access national and international information at the same level and time as urban populations;
- improving the trade performance of rural producers and informal sector entrepreneurs. With the possibility of joining the network, producers located in the inner provinces (arts and crafts workers, women's and youth economic groupings, etc.) can advertise their production inside and outside Senegal;
- reinforcing actions to promote arts and crafts workers and rural economic units, in general: by allowing access to better supply sources and ensuring quality training, Trade Point will contribute to creating a Senegal trade mark for good quality production. This quality of goods (standards, finishing and packaging) will be decisive for national foreign trade policy. In this connection, Trade Point Senegal envisages developing intensive promotion of home-made products through virtual trade fairs organized over the Internet;
- stabilizing rural migration or even reversing the trend thanks to the emergence of new rural entrepreneurs.

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