MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRES (CICs) IN THE AGE OF ICT:

GHANA'S BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

The vision of the Community Information Centre concept is to create rural access centres and use the medium of ICT to promote community-based ICT applications that will promote operational efficiencies delivered through effective and timely availability of information.

2. Background

There is an emerging new economic revolution and Ghana is determined to be part of it. Ghana is also determined that the benefit of the new economic revolution which requires intensive and intelligent use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) be not limited to the city and urban dwellers only but also to the rural folks. This requires special government intervention for the underserved areas.

The need to ensure that the rural dwellers and the underprivileged are not left out was a special demand in the declaration of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Governments, particularly those in the developing world are thus challenged to facilitate the provision of rural ICT access centres to become centres of learning and assist in bridging the digital divide between rural and urban communities.

Ghana's ICT for Accelerated Development Policy also proposes the deployment and spread of ICTs in the 'Community as a way to improve the economic base and further accelerate growth and development toward transforming Ghana into an information society.

3. Project Definition

The Community Information Centre model has been adopted to provide a hybrid not-for-profit community resource centre and for profit telecentre.

The purpose is to provide communities development information and business services to remote communities. CIC's will provide access to: Internet-enabled computers, software based on the local information needs, Fax machines, Printers, Copiers, Telephones, Televisions and Radios. In addition there will be an adjoining library with books and daily newspapers and magazines.

The CIC's will be connected at their remote locations via satellite to the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT to facilitate system management.

The CIC's will further be linked to the government portal at the Information Services Department of the Ministry of Information to facilitate government to citizen (G2C) interaction.

When the District portals are created CIC's will further be linked to the respective District portals for the promotion of on-line communication and services. CICs will therefore form an integral part of Ghana's e-government structure.

4.   **Project objectives:**

- To assist in bridging the digital divide between rural and urban areas.
- To provide community information needs and enhance national integration.
- To create ICT awareness in the rural areas.
- To disseminate information to the rural communities especially in areas of health, local government, environment, agriculture etc.
- To provide opportunity for ICT training in the communities
- To support business activities in the rural communities by providing market information on improved agricultural production and extension services.
- Support for community-bases organisations through promotion of workshops and publication resources.

5.   **Relation to Poverty Reduction**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) set very ambitious targets to address structural concerns that impede economic growth and human development.

Ghana's own poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) represents comprehensive policies, strategies, programmes and projects at macro and micro levels to support growth and poverty reduction. Within these broad frameworks, ICT is being deployed at CIC's as a tool for poverty reduction to:

- Improve access and quality of education in the rural areas.
- Contribute to women's empowerment through training and provision of small-scale business information.
- Provision of communication to rural areas.
- Improve governance and inclusiveness at the local level.

6.   **Targeted Beneficiaries:**

- General Community Members.
- School Children
- Youth out of School
- Women and women groups
- Private Businesses
- Non-Governmental Organisations
- Local Government Authorities

7. **Products and Services**

i **Community Services**

a. Provision of accurate crop prices in nearby markets to assist farmers in marketing their products.

b. The provision of weather information to guide farmers and fishermen.

c. Promoting of basic extension services for women groups engaged in micro credit ventures.

d. Radio and Television broadcasting.

e. HIV/AIDS Communications.

f. Public Health Management

g. Local government information

h. Internet navigation for beginners

ii **Social Services**

a. Low Cost computer training
b. Computer access to rural students.
c. Tele-library for Teachers
d. Access to on line text-scores
e. Student loan/scholarship information.

iii **Business Services**

The Business services intended to be promoted to increase efficiency and save time for rural dwellers include:

- Internet browsing
- Internet Communication – e-mail, instant messaging
- Desktop publishing and printing.
- CD sales and writing
- Scanning
- Faxing and coping
- Telephone-Local and Long distance access

8.   **Project Sites**:

The project is planned to cover all the 230 constituencies of the country. Government intends to facilitate the construction of these centres as a demonstration of its commitment to universal access.

For a start 12 of the centres have been sited at the following locations under a Government of Ghana (GoG) and government of India (GoI) collaboration.

1. Nkwanta   -   Volta Region
2. Akim Swedru   -   Eastern Region
3. Nkawie   -   Ashanti Region
4. Sefwi Wiawso   -   Western Region
5. Berekum   -   Brong Ahafo Region
6. Navrongo   -   Upper East Region
7. Wa   -   Upper West Region
8. Yendi   -   Northern Region
9. Dodowa   -   Greater Accra Region
10. Ajumako   -   Central Region
11. Amoako   -   Ashanti Region
12. Anyinase   -   Western Region

Additional 50 CIC's are under construction in the following locations..

1. **Upper East Region**
    Bolgatanga
    Bawku
    Sandema
    Bongo
    Zebilla

2. **Volta Region**
    Worawora
    Peki Avetile/Blengo
    Tsito Awudome
    Agbozume
    Wheta

3. **Ashanti Region**

    Nsuta Kwaman
    Jamasi
    Nkwantakese
    Atobiase
    Anyinase

4. **Eastern Region**

    Begoro
    Somanya
    Kwabeng
    Akropong
    Abiriw

5. **Northern Region**

    Gushiegu
    Seboba
    Domongo
    Bimbilla
    Salaga

6. **Upper West Region**

    Lawra
    Jirapa
    Funsi
    Tumu
    Nadawli

7. **Central Region**   8. **Brong Ahafo**

    Abura Dunkwa   Atebubu
    Saltpond   Bechem
    Breman Asikuma   Techiman
    Assin Fosu   Wenchi
    Apam

9. **Western Region**   10 **Greater Accra**

    Kwesimintsim   Kokomlemle
    Bibiani   Faith Kope (Dangbe East)
    Anyinase   Abokobi
    Enchi
    Essam

9   **Implementation Strategy**

        To promote uniformity in the establishment of CIC's across the country, an
        approved prototype design of CIC shall be used as a guide for construction.

        The Regional Consultative Councils in close liaison with the beneficiary District
        Assemblies shall do the selection of sites for construction in a decentralised manner.

        The Ministry of Communications shall support government's input into the CIC concept
        through vigorous sourcing of donor support to replicate construction in all constituencies of
        the country.

10.   **Project Management**

        In line with the country's decentralisation policy, the management of the CIC's will be done
        through the participatory approach.

        The Ministry of Communications shall oversee the infrastructure development. The
        selection of contractors and award of contracts will be the responsibility of the Regional
        Co-coordinating Councils.

        Under the overall supervision of the beneficiary District Assembly the Frontline
        Management
        Structure shall be composed as follows:-

- .Representative of the District Assembly at the Unit.

- Representative of Health Services

- Representative of Ghana Education Service

- Representative of National Commission for Women's Development

- Representative of Information Services Development (to serve as secretary).

- Representative of the Ministry of Agriculture

- Representative of Telecom Service Providers

- Representative of NGO's

- Representative of CBO's

A centre administrator with skills in ICT shall be engaged to facilitate service delivery at the Centre.

The District Assembly shall be responsible for the total subsistence of the centers and shall also be responsible for the payment of the wages of the administrator and one support staff in the short term.

With time the Assembly will have to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the community to enable members establish community steering communities which will bring a sense of community ownership and care for the CIC's.

11.   **Sustainability and Replicability**

The project expects to develop, within two years, the necessary local capacity to operate and maintain the centre under the supervision of the District Assembly. Internally generated funds through its business support services would be accounted for through simple accounting procedures that will be periodically audited by the District Assembly.

The Ministry of Communications shall limit its role to monitoring operations and provide the necessary back stopping technical assistance through its ICT Directorate in concert with the Kofi Annan ICT Centre of Excellence.

The Ministry of Information through the Information ServiceS Department shall provide government information lineage with the Centres.

The Regional Co-ordinating Councils shall monitor the progress of CIC operations.

It is expected that the pilot projects should be able to demonstrate the powerful impact of the Internet and PC based services on the lives of the rural dwellers who should be willing to pay for these services. Decentralised Ministries like Agriculture, Health etc can buy time on the networks for agricultural and health extension services.

12.   **<u>Conclusion</u>**

The introduction of the Community Information Centre Concept is to introduce innovative use of technology in the provision of information services to promote economic sustainability and at the same time be more responsive of local needs.

The emphasis on sustainability of the Centres is being propagated to enable the models rely on domestic resource mobilisation in the long run to support the scalability of the model.

Government on its part is committed to provide the basic infrastructure, connectivity and computer services to the low-income sector of the population.

Donor/International support to the CIC models of development is welcome.

August 2004