

Programme for ICT trials in five target districts

(Deliverable No. 2 of First Mile Phase 2, IFAD-Agridea)

Introduction

In August the following districts were visited: Hai, Babati, Muheza, Mufindi, Songea where AMSDP has terminated its engagement, and Same where engagement will shortly be terminated. Kilosa was visited on the way north, looking at the Ruaha-Mbuyuni onion market and the intensive onion growing area in Malolo plus some short talks with the newly posted district officials in Kilosa.

Discussions concentrated on understanding the status of emergence of MACs and their immediate learning agendas. This short paper points out the trials that need to be undertaken with regard to the ICT situation.

Connecting to the internet.

With regard to connectivity in the five target Districts the survey by Galin Kora and Amour Usi revealed that the path forward is straightforward and already quite clear:

- a. **Mobile access:** Anywhere where a strong mobile signal reaches, a USB modem can be used to access the internet via GPRS, with pay-as-you-go. This option is the most suitable for MAC staff when they are travelling within the district, ie. with their laptops.
- b. **Stationary access** at the district base of the MAC will be through broadband cable as soon as it arrives. In each of the districts efforts are under way by TTCL to provide cabled broadband access within the next few months at the district headquarter towns where MACs are based. A wireless CDMA solution may be the alternative in case a cabled solution is not possible. The intermediate solution until that option is available is suggested to be that MACs make arrangements with locally operating internet cafes.

With regard to connecting to the internet, the trials shall be:

- Take up contact with service providers and understand when the broadband access is available and how to prepare for when it is ready.
- Take up contact with rental services of computers for a laptop with GPRS modem. Explore the options for a possible renting arrangement.

Signal coverage

The situation is fast changing with regard to coverage by the mobile signal and local radio. It is important that MACs learn about coverage in their area and compare with the marketing potentials. This shall allow to point out to telecom providers where a push for further coverage will be most beneficial. It will also allow to organize the own network of information with the billboards.

With regard to the signal coverage, the trials shall be:

- Map out the mobile signal coverage and local radio coverage out into the remote villages, and try to identify upcoming changes.
- Approach the mobile signal providers and local radio operators to do something about the areas that are not yet covered. What can be done? What can a MAC do to move it along?

Website

The MACs must establish a simple web-presence as soon as possible in order to ensure locally relevant content is available and downloadable – all in Swahili. Furthermore the upcoming data-base with an interface to SMS will need a home on the internet. This must be on an easily identifiable website which farmer groups and traders will regularly visit to stay informed.

With regard to websites, the trials shall be:

- Ensure a home-page on the websites of TCCIA in each District. From there links to a dynamic website under own management. Is this possible with TCCIA?
- Learn to manage and regularly update a simple website. How is the CMS (content management system) going to look like for MACs?
- Attempt to find sponsors and advertisements already on the first website. Is there a chance for an early income stream?

LLL online learning platform for exchange

The MACs must stay in contact with each other to learn from exchange of experiences and ideas. Many potential groups willing to emerge as commercial MACs are still not good in staying in contact and contributing or reacting, and therefore are cut off from the exchanges.

With regard to the LLL-platform, the trials shall be:

- Intensive backchannel mentoring to coach members to exchange on the platform. Monitor the reasons why members do not react inspite of being in contact with the internet. Are they mainly problems of connectivity, or lack of technical skills, or failure to comprehend the importance of this?
- Explore the use of SMS to members to alert them to messages on the platform that are important to them.

Procedure

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin these trials in all five districts plus Same.• Mentoring via First Mile InstantTeam.• Reflect on progress on ICE team.• Preliminary assessment by end of 2007 and reorient or change priorities.• Assessment workshop in March 2008. |
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