

How to reach financial autonomy for telecenters

Par Stéphane Bruno, Expert
National
UNDP Haiti

PIC : telecenter in Haiti

- PIC : Point d'Information et de Communication
- Community access in regions that are not electrified and that have poor or non-existent communication facilities
- Characteristics:
 - Runs on solar energy, low consumption equipments, open source and terminal-based architecture
 - Connectivity by mainstream satellite access

Hypothesis

- No funding available from Government
- Funding available for startup investments from external cooperation
- Unreliable funding from external cooperation for operating costs

Strategies

- Generate revenues at least to cover overhead and operating costs
- Control operating costs:
 - Looking for better prices for connectivity
 - Original management model with participation of the community
 - Looking for inexpensive equipments, mainly diskless terminals

Criteria to establish a PIC

- Identify a remote isolated and marginalised community
- Identify a minimum social organisation of the community (cooperative, association, etc.)
- Identify potential or actual economic activities that could benefit from ICTs

The network of PICs

- A current pilot project of 5 PICs in dispersed areas
- A short term project of a dozen PICs concentrated in a single department
- An ideal network of 565 PICs, that is one in each commune

The role of the PIC in the community

- The PIC is a broker for economic activities
- The PIC is a proximity relay for the State; it links local government to central government; it acts as a service counter for online government services
- The PIC is a window for the community on the Internet

Strategies to generate revenues

- Establish paid traditional services:
 - Telephony services
 - Navigation services
 - Office services and printing
 - Imaging and messaging
- Design applications and facilities to help farmers/small business owners/fishermen to expose their products and make direct contact with clients
- Local ebay functionality
- Establish services for government services (identification of citizens and other formalities)

Drawbacks and other limitations

- ICTs resolve half of the problem : market reach, direct contact with clients, elimination of intermediaries, better stock management
- Often, supply cannot meet demand
- Supply constraints : archaic methods, environment problems, etc.

Lesson

- Integrated projects addressing not only pure ICT issues, but also supply problems

- For more, visit www.pic.ht