NEEDS ANALYSIS CONSULTATION
11 – 12 APRIL 2008
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

ICT4 EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

2009-2012

On

The Development of ICT Community Centres of Excellence

PROJECT PROMOTER
AFGHAN ACTION

PROJECT PARTNERS

Government Logo

COVENTRY COMMUNITY FORUM (NEED LOGO)

PROJECT SPONSOR

Message from:

Rt. Hon. Datuk Seri Mohd Ali bin Mohd Rustam

 The President of the World Assembly of Youth and Chief Minister of Melaka

On behalf of the World Assembly of Youth (WAY), I would like to thank the project promoters for initiating this ICT4 Education and Development pilot project in Afghanistan. ICT is an important enabling tool for human capital development worldwide.

WAY, has been in the forefront in assisting National Youth Councils, youth organizations and NGOS around the world to be part of the ICT era. We fully support initiatives that bring to ordinary people, in particular to children and youth, access to ICT.

Afghanistan is in the process of development, like many countries that have been devastated by decades of war in the world. Thus the importance of "bridging the digital divide" cannot be understated. And therefore this pilot project will be of much importance to human development, poverty alleviation and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, adopted at the United Nations by all Governments.

As a Malaysian and the President of WAY, I am particularly encouraged by the fact that since the inaugural ICT4 Development meeting in 2002 in Kuala Lumpur, where Afghanistan was assisted in developing their own agenda of the use of ICT to empower society and build the necessary human resources for the country's development, this project is in the process of being realised.

The World Assembly of Youth will be committed to assisting in the implementation of the project. I believe that all partners in this project can afford expertise, access to networks and most importantly, people to people solidarity.

I very much look forward to hosting the Afghan staff of this project in my state for study visits when they come to Malaysia for their training programme and also how WAY can be instrumental in moving forward the long-term replication of the project.

I wish you all the best in your consultation to prepare for the implementation of this noble project.

Thank you!

Report of the Needs Analysis Consultation
13th April 2008,
Kabul Inn, Kabul Afghanistan

آجندای سیمینار

9:00-9:30 ثبت نام و چای

گشایش سیمینارتوسط کریس بیلس مسول افغان اکشن ,9:30-10:00 دوکتور خواجه نجیب الله
حاجی علی رستم مسول بخش انجمن جوانان.,عمری مشاور ارشد وزارت معارف

10:00-10:45 مقدمه
A)   معرفی
B)   توقعات
C)   سهم گیر

تشریح پروژه توسط هیوجین راج اروکیسامی مشاور افغان اکشن ,10:45-12:0 محمد
غنی ابراهیم مشاور اشد بنیاد سلام مالیزیا.

12:00 -13:00 صرف نان چاشت

ICT4ED 13:00-14:00 ارزیابی مشارکت در پروژه

14:00-15:30 تاثیرات بالای پروژه
هر گروپ نظریات خویش را در بخش های مختلف پروژه ارایه ,کار دسته جمعی
مینمایند.

15:30-16:00
ختم سیمینار

AGENDA – DAY 1

9.00 – 9.30   **Registration and Coffee**

9.30 – 10.00   **Opening Remarks**
Chris Beales, Chief Executive, Afghan Action
Dr. Omary, TVET Dept. Ministry of Education
Speech by Datuk Seri Haji Ali Rustam, Chief Minister of
Melaka and President of the World Assembly of Youth

10. 00 – 11.15   **Icebreaker/Introductions**

11.00 – 12.30   **Pilot Project Overview (Powerpoint presentation)**
Eugene Raj Arokiasamy, Senior Project Consultant –
Afghan Action & AOC & Associates Group
Mohd Ghani Ismail, Asst. Senior Project Consultant - Chief
Executive Officer, Salam Foundation, Malaysia (Salam's e-
initiative for potential replication in Afghanistan)

12.30 – 13.30   **Lunch**

13.30 – 16.00   **Input into the Project Proposal**

Workgroups – each group will be called to provide
input to specific sections of the project proposal
outline

16.00 – 16.30   **Tea and closing remarks for DAY 1**

1. Overview of the Needs Analysis Consultation

On the 13th of April 2008, Afghan Action and partners organised a Needs Analysis consultation was in Kabul involving 25 representatives from NGOs, Youth and Women's organisations, the Government, UN Agencies and the Private sector. This consultation was funded by the Big Lottery International Small Grants Programme (in order that a large-scale application to the International Communities Grants Fund of the Big Lottery can be made).

a) The consultation enable the identification of specific areas that the project should be focused on as part of the implementation process.

b) It also enabled the establishment of a planning committee, comprising of representatives of local NGOs, the Academic sector, UN Agencies, the Government and the Private sector for the use of ICT for Education and Development in the the country.

c) The consultation had a specific focus on developing a pilot project to engage young people - children and youth - who make up a large percentrage of the population, but not exclusively. Although the one of objectives that was adopted at the consultation was to focus on a designing a pro-poor and employablity (current rates of youth unemployment is 50%), participants stressed that the ICT4ED pilot project should aim to involve all citizens in the country.

d) It was also agreed by representatives that ICT skills would significantly improve educational standards, alleviate poverty, improve health education, facilitate job creation and income generation and empowerment of the population.

e) It was also noted at the consultation, that the United Nations Development Programme Mission in Afghanistan had allocated resources for ICT capacity building in Afghanistan. However resources are primarly focused on building capacity in the government sector. It was also agreed there was a need for a long-term self-sustaining ICT4ED capacity building project for the community.

f) The representatives attending the consultation requested that Afghan Action and partners utilise their expertise to mobilise resources in order to realise the ICT4ED project and establish pilot ICT Community Centres.

g) The needs analysis also agreed that the Government ICT strategy adopted in the Kuala Lumpur Strategic Planning meeting in 2002 and subsequent policies by the Government of Afghanistan should be a policy for any ICT4ED project. Some of the intervention strategies that the representatives of the consultation adopted are as follows:

i)   Developing a Capacity Building Programme:

- To introduce ICTs to Community Based Organisations, NGOs and the public sector and wider society;

- To educate people in society about the importance of ICTs;

- To upgrade human resoure, specifically in the use of ICTs across all sectors in society;

ii)   Ensuring ICT Access for excluded and marginalised people, in particular children and youth;

- To enable all members of local communities, urban or rural, to fully participate and benefit from the service provision at the ICT Community Centres/Libraries;

- To utilise local languages and assistive technologies to encourage excluded and marginalised and persons with disabilities to access and use the ICT Community Centres/Libraries.

2. Powerpoint Presentations were then made by Mr.Eugene Raj Arokiasamy from AOC & Afghan Action on the proposed project and by Mr.Md.Ghani from Salam on the e-salam initiative that could be one of the models to be used in Afghanistan (see appendix 1 and 2).

3. During Lunch informal discussions groups took place with discussions on how ICTs can assist with development in Afghanistan

4. Plenary Session following the Workgroups

- **Group 1**
- What are the challenges that may be faced in the implementation of this ICT4D project?
- How can we effectively market and promote this project in the community?

Presentation by Group 1

a) Members of the group were very supportive of the pilot project. They suggested that the Fair Trade carpet project it should be expanded throughout the country if it include a good support educational

programme – including ICT as a component. They felt that this project had 3 advantages if it was promoted effectively. The reasons were that:

1. It would become "a famous programme" if was of good quality. Afghanistan has many IT training programmes but very few of them are of quality or at low cost. Thus there would be significant interest and support for such a project.

2. The pilot project could create employment in the medium and long-term and this was really need now in the country. However project costing must enable young people to be educated but also be able to earn some money to help their families.

3. The training programme run by Afghan Action (making of carpets) could create awareness of the conditions and situation in Afghanistan worldwide through the use of ICT as a marketing tool.

b) The group suggested that the ICT4ED pilot project should start in the big cities first, moving on to the smaller cities before delivery to district and village levels. They felt that this would enable capacity building for Afghan people to themselves deliver this project throughout the country.

c) They suggested mapping of infrastructure was important. There are many issues such as the lack of electricity in many parts of the country. For instance only 10% of Kabul city has electricity, and even that is on constant with many "black-outs" on a regular basis.

d) When planning the project designers should take into account the fact that there is a very large percentage of the population who are illiterate. In rural areas even teachers are not qualified as they do not receive adequate training. ICT could be used to help them particular if they could be outreach training programmes or access to on-line education.

e) The group felt that language was an issue too. However it should not have to be an obstacle. There are ways of overcoming language barriers. It was suggested by the youth participants that English should be taught to enable people to use ICT better.

f) The use of volunteers in project delivery was raised by the group. This issue of poverty and under or unemployment was a significant problem. Afghanistan is still a poor country and many young people can't afford to do volunteer work. Thus for this project to successfully engage/utilized the human resources of volunteers – they would have to be paid. Some of the youth delegates pointed out that they had worked as volunteers for 5 years or more but now could no longer do this as they could not afford it.

g) There should be a well funded publicity strategy for the project to be known by people in the country. Often projects exist but most people don't know about them. Also it was suggested that there should be an emphasis on using people to people communications promote the project. The project should also be would be spread by "word of mouth" as it was particularly important means of communication in the country.

h) Project implementers should be practical and take into account the situation in the country. A possibility would be to begin the project in Universities and Colleges in the country, then going down to schools and home-based schooling and then out to remote areas.

The session also included inputs from the floor. These included the following:

a) The UNICEF representative pointed out that the pilot project aims to pay volunteers an allowance on a salary. So the issue of not being getting some financial contribution to assist volunteers should not be an issue. In

addition it would also allow volunteers from a poor background to be involved.

b) The representative from Kabul City, Department of Education said that English and local languages (Pashto, Dari, etc) should be used so nobody would be excluded from the benefits of using ICT. Thus this should be a central strategy/policy for the new ICT Community Centres. In the long-term Afghan's will have to produce their own software in their own languages, but they will start with gaining IT skills first. Mr. Md. Ghani, one of the Project Consultants, said that there is software available to in many different languages, for instance Microsoft currently provides options to use many different languages.

- **Group 2**
- How do people use ICT in their daily lives in Afghanistan (personal and professional)?
- How can we increase the use of ICT in Afghanistan?

a) The group felt that ICT is very important for personal development and in practical life. ICT's are being used everyday – mobile phones, TV, radio, computers, etc. It was noted that many people, especially in the case of IT skills learnt by themselves. However for professional use, the group felt there should be training programmes to enable effective and correct use. There are many courses in town but in semi-rural and rural areas this is not the case.

b) Many people are using IT for education. They see it as an important too which can help improve their employability – on-line education was a good example of this. In addition to chatting, IT is being used by many people for "search purposes" as there is limited sources of hardcopy information in the country.

c) The group felt that in the future, once people are more IT savvy, use IT could be used in the areas of medicine – for instance Telemedicine, environment and conservation, disaster mitigation and income generation – through marketing products worldwide on the web. For this to happen access and technical skill-set needed to developed. A good way would be to use distance learning programmes via the internet.

d) The group felt that there was currently insufficient information about the usefulness of ICT, in particular IT. However if there was a active programme to explain how beneficial IT could be for the future of the individual and the country, most people would support its usage. Parents would want their children not to be left behind in the information age, as it would help them in the future.

e) ICT's should be used with the framework of government curriculum. This exists but in many schools or colleges there are no computers. Where there are computers most, if not all of them are not operational. Furthermore the reality at the moment is that there are insufficient teachers with IT skills or knowledge to teach students. Thus training is crucial for students to be engage in the use of ICT's especially IT. There also should be a long-term approach which involved training of trainers, not only in IT software skills but in hardware maintenance. This capacity building process can also be used in the rural areas –curriculum should be designed with a focus on utilization of local languages. Afghan IT specialist should assist with developing appropriate language friendly software.

f) The representative of Children in Crisis and a member of the group, suggested that showcasing best practice was very important to engage marginalised groups like street/working children. He gave an example of how word of mouth marketing is so important. –"If we support street

children to learn about IT, the general public will soon say – hey! look that child was working on the street now he knows about IT and has better opportunities because of learning how to use IT".

g) The group also stressed the importance of working with those who are already working with marginalsed and excluded groups. They have the knowledge and expertise to deliver more effectively any outreach programmes. For instance, Children in Crisis currently organises street/working children, often providing them with accommodation, wages increase, their rights are better protected and they have a chance to improve their hard lives. For example one street child after being involved in one of their programmes for 3 years can even speak English. Giving small grants to parents to start up micro-enterprise and educating them on the importance of education also helps to reduce the number of street/working children.

h) As for ICT use in rural areas, the group felt it is already there – mobile phones, radio, etc but not computers for IT education. However people in rural areas are hungry to learn. In fact all of the Afghan people are hungry to learn after nearly 3 decades of not having proper education – "Someone from far away in a rural area – they may not know about how to use IT but if the teachers are trained the person will learn".

i) Immediately, the group felt that the beneficiaries maybe students from schools and universities. Although this is limited, project implementers have to start somewhere. But centres could be open to others who are interested to learn about ICTs, in particular IT skills.

j) On physical set-up of ICT Centres, the group suggested that a mapping exercise has to be done to see where these centres should be located. Many parts of Afghanistan still do not have electricity – even in Kabul. It was suggested that schools, colleges, universities could be the first point

of entry. Infrastructure existed – e.g. buildings, water, electricity, etc. And also because many students will have some knowledge about ICTs – "If you start them young the next generation will not be in the current situation that the older students are facing". However the group emphasised that there must also be "personal interest and commitment to learn" and people must try to improve themselves by being "dedicated themselves".

Question from the floor – How can we develop IT focused curriculum in the country?

The UNICEF representative and member of the group said that it already exists, but it needs to be made more user-friendly, practical and accessible. More people have to be trained, especially teachers. The group felt that ICT centres were greatly needed. Cost prevents the average person from accessing IT at the moment however "Once one is set-up there will be lots of support for the use of ICT/IT if training programmes are at a low cost. And if the centre is successful, there would tremendous support for more ICT centres and programmes from everyone".

- **Group 3**
- How can you, your organization, government and private sector contribute towards the project immediately and in long term?

a) The privates sector in Afghanistan can't at the moment be compared with private sectors in other countries – this country is still in a war and suffering from nearly 3 decades of war. The private sector is still under-developed and it will take a lot of time before they can be fully involved in such a programme. The Group felt that flexibility was the key to engaging the private sector. In fact the private sector could also be involved in

training programme, as ICT/IT skills were lacking in the private sector too.

b) As for government involvement, it was good to note that there were representatives from various government ministries at the meeting. However most government projects are currently focused in cities. Rural areas are not targeted at the moment – "Nobody seems interested in these areas – even government officials". Security could also be a reason for the lack of presence of government officials in rural areas. But it will be useful to involve government officials from rural areas in the project. This could be done by informing them or doing a roadshow to tell them about the project and its goal.

c) The groups felt that for this project to be successful in the long-term it had to be promoted at community levels. People in urban areas often don't know about such project. The situation is even more difficult in rural areas, where people rarely find out about any projects. In addition a lot of people are disillusioned about such project as many funders promise great projects and funds for them but the funding is rarely received or the projects never realised. So in this instance the group felt that the private sector and local philanthropists should also be approached to source support. It might be the case that "there are many rich people in Afghanistan, they should be approached to help with funding the project".

d) For this project to successful in the long-term there should be collaboration with vocational education institutions. The group felt that there is a link between ICT's and vocational education in the country. This will enable long-term stability and also building of capacity for those who are teaching at vocational or technical education centres.

e) The group pointed out that because of low levels of literacy in Afghanistan an innovative approach should be taken by the project designers to make

it a success in the long-term –"People don't have the culture of reading as they are illiterate. Language is in high level in newspapers and books and most people can't understand them". Therefore ICT project and materials used in ICT projects should use simple language. Here the project promoters should work with private sector, government and international agencies who can help with supporting the production of bespoke materials using simple and local language.

f) It was noted that there should be an information campaign to ensure that people start knowing about ICT's and their use, in particular the importance of IT literacy. There should be an emphasis on providing information in smaller cities, districts and rural areas as there is a lack of knowledge or understand in many of these areas – "Many of them don't even know how to write their names, but if you explain to them individually they can understand about it". Here the youth groups, CBO's NGO's and government offices can be of great importance in disseminating information. Out reach project will be very useful in promoting this information.

Statement from the floor – ICT use should take into account literacy levels. If this project is to work the project designers must take into account that there are different levels and abilities. This can be done by working with local NGOs and community groups. The outreach projects can be used to inform people about ICT when talking about other subjects like health or the environment. At the same time an assessment of the literacy levels can be done without embarrassing the target group.

Statement from the floor- Most people are chatting or downloading music at the moment – so the project must also focus on changing mind-set.

Statement from the floor – Some people in Afghanistan will not agree with the project. They may not like computers because of some of the bad

influences it brings. Several participants from the floor disagreed stating that this was a government endorsed project and therefore there will be guidelines and regulations as to how it will be implemented so the people won't be so worried. In addition if is also being promoted by CBOs and NGOs at grass-roots levels this will counter misinformation about the negative influences of ICT's.

Mr.Md. Ghani also pointed out that computers can be blocked to prevent access to gambling and pornographic sites. Membership rules can be included at all ICT community Centres, and breaking of the rules could lead to exclusion from the training programmes.

4. Conclusion

Mr. Md. Ghani and Mr. Arokiasamy concluded the presentation by taking questions from the floor. Mr. Md. Ghani thanked the group and stated that contributions were very useful. He mentioned that the discussion on volunteering and payment for volunteering was something that the project designers will take into account. Mr. Arokiasamy concurred, stating that this had already been costed into the project to prevent youth volunteers from low-income or marginalized groups being prevented from becoming ICT Champions. Mr. MD.Ghani indicated that professionals had to be paid but for instance in Malaysia, some professionals contribute their time for free. This could be something that professionals in Afghanistan could take into account and be involved in. Mr. Arokisamy asked the group if a road show would be useful. There was unanimous agreement that this could be one of the marketing strategies. Finally, the members of the consultation were asked if they would like to members of the planning committee to implement the pilot project. There was once again unanimous indication from all participants to be co-opted into the planning committee.