Knowledge Networks through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities in the Asia-Pacific Region

Project Evaluation
Final Report
(3 July 2010)

Prepared by Swoyambhu Man Amatya (Mr.)

Consultant

Commissioned by
ESCAP/IDD, Bangkok

Web page: www.unescap.org/idd/kn.asp

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a report of the evaluation of project *Knowledge Networks through ICT access points for disadvantaged communities* (KN4DC) that was carried out from 21 April to 28 May 2010 by an independent consultant. This evaluation was carried out as one of the activities of the United Nations Development Account Project entitled "Knowledge Networks through ICT access points for disadvantaged communities", which is being implemented by the five Regional Commissions of the United Nations: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). ESCAP, in co-operation with ECE, had implemented the project in the Central Asian subregion[1] as part of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of the Central Asia (SPECA).

The project aimed to empower poor and disadvantaged communities; women in particular, through transforming selected existing ICT access points into knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks, to provide, develop, organize, share and disseminate knowledge pertinent to these communities.

The major objectives of the evaluation were 1) to assess the achievements, outcomes and impact of the regional implementation of the project and 2) to identify future actions which would help promote the results of the project at the regional level and maximize its chances of sustainability.

The evaluation, essentially, consists of four parts: 1) analysis of achievements of the project activities in Asia-Pacific region including Central Asia; 2) analysis of achievements of the project outcomes; 3) examination of the relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of project outcomes; and 4) examination of project impact. The analyses are based on the questionnaire survey conducted by consultant and review of secondary information, including reports and websites.

The evaluation showed that during the project period (2006-2009) the following activities were successfully completed.

- Two review and assessment[2]

- Two regional stakeholders meetings organized in Bangkok, Thailand, and Baku, Azerbaijan

- One network consultative meeting organized in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

- Three regional workshops including the concluding workshops organized in Nanjing, China; Dushanbe, Tajikistan; and Bangkok, Thailand

Besides, the project produced number of knowledge products designed to improve the implementation and understanding of knowledge networks. ESCAP successfully built partnership with Information and Communications Technology Agency (ICTA), International Research & Exchange Board (IREX), International Development Research Centre (IDRC)-Telecentre.org and the Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies (CSDMS). The project has also enabled

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[1] Central Asia or Central Asian subregion includes the following eight countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. They are members of both ECE and ESCAP.

[2] One of the Review and Assessment reports was prepared by ECE.

the United Nations Regional Commissions to collaborate on a common project and strengthen their links. The project has developed synergy through participation in various ICT forums/ events.

The evaluation revealed that the project has achieved its expected goals. Two Regional Networks were established: *Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network (APTN)* (November 2008) and *Eurasia Telecentre Network (ETN)* (October 2009), formerly named as Central Asia Telecentre Network. They are networks of network. Currently APTN, hosted by ICTA and located in Sri Lanka, has 95 online members in its web portal (http://a-ptnetwork.ning.com) including representatives from more than 20 different organizations and telecentre networks. The network plays an important role in empowering the poor and the disadvantaged communities to enhance knowledge and value added services as innovators of these services, then as promoters and orchestrators by offering support to networks that work directly with these communities.

The project's web portal (www.unescap.org/idd/kn/index.asp) is linked with web portals of both the Regional Networks: APTN (http://a-ptnetwork.ning.com) and ETN (www.telecentre-eurasia-english.ning.com). APTN is further linked with other web portals such as telecentre.org.

ETN embraces networks of Central Asia and few Russian speaking countries in east Europe hosted by IREX. Its website (www.telecentre-eurasia-english.ning.com) currently has two versions: English and Russian. Eurasia Telecentre Network is planning to establish a national network in the country. Despite several challenges, the evaluations indicated that these two networks have been playing a crucial role in developing interconnection and collaboration beyond regional boarders and have taken a step ahead towards achieving ESCAP's regional visibility.

The evaluations have indicated that the project activities have been relevant for target beneficiaries establishing network and building capacity of the already existed networking in the Asia-Pacific region including Central Asia, among others. The administration of the project has been very well handled. Project activities have been completed on time. In a number of occasions, the project took advantages of potential cost-savings and building synergy with other activities.

The evaluation revealed that more than one hundred and thirty nine (139) persons from around 30 countries and representatives from international organizations have attended the capacity building workshops/ consultative meetings organized by the project in Asia-Pacific region. One of the essences of the project objectives was to invite the same individual attached with the telecentre activities in her/ his organizations. It has been found that many individuals of the same organization have attended capacity building workshops/ consultative meetings three times consecutively. These workshops/ consultative meetings have directly benefited the participants excluding the ripple effects it had with other stakeholders over time.

Feedbacks from participants showed a high level of appreciation for the content and organization of the capacity building workshops and consultative meetings and greater number of participants were able to share knowledge within and between countries and at regional basis.

The evaluation has pointed out some important reflections on the sustainability of project outcomes. Financial sustainability of the established regional networks, and continual support and recognition from government are some of the major challenges.

The evaluation has identified some key regional challenges (shortcomings) and the lessons learned over time. Based on the overall performances, some key recommendations for sustaining the project outcomes in the days to come have been made.

Acknowledgements

Acronyms

APCICT- Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development

APTN- Asia Pacific Telecentre Network

CeC- Community e-Centres

CSDMS- Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies

ECA- Economic Commission for Africa

ECE- Economic Commission for Europe

ECLAC -Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

ESCAP- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

ESCWA- Economic and Social Commission for West Asia

ETN- Eurasia Telecentre Network

ICT- Information and Communications Technology

ICTA- Information and Communications Technology Agency of Sri Lanka

IDD- Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division of ESCAP

IREX- International Research & Exchange Board

MDGs- Millennium Development Goals

NGOs- Non-Governmental Organizations

SPECA- United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia

WSDD- World Summit on Sustainable Development

WSIS- World Summit on the Information Society

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background of the project, the purpose of evaluation, objectives, outputs and scope, as outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR) of this evaluation.

1.1 Background of the evaluation

This is the final evaluation report of the United Nations Development Account Project on "Knowledge Networks through ICT access points for disadvantaged communities" that was conducted between April–May 2010. The evaluation was conducted by Mr. Swoyambhu Man Amatya, an independent consultant.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) access points, also known as Telecentres or Community e-Centres (CeC), have been in existence for years but knowledge on their use for sustainable development appears to be still fragmented and underutilized in developing countries, including countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Numerous ICT access points have been established but many of them have not been able to adequately share information and knowledge relevant for social and economic development within the communities that they serve. Especially among the poor and disadvantages communities, in which people have low level of income, health, education and general well-being owing to, among other things, poor or no access to markets and public goods, ICT could be an effective and innovative infrastructure to enable such communities to reach markets and public services. ICT access points/ telecentres could be, therefore, an effective tool in realizing many socioeconomic development goals.

But there are challenges for ICT access points / telecentres to share their knowledge for development. To improve their effectiveness and to optimize the use of their limited resources, telecentres need to network to share information and knowledge, experience and products such as content, training materials and marketing information. In this context, the establishment of knowledge networks of telecentres in the Asia-Pacific region could be one of the options to promote development in poor and disadvantaged communities.

In order to address these challenges, the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project entitled **Knowledge networks through ICT access points for disadvantaged communities (KN4DC)** was initiated in mid 2006. The key functions of a Knowledge Network were 'interconnection" and "collaboration". ICT applications such as mobile phones and the Internet are used to facilitate the collaboration and knowledge sharing. Therefore, this project had aimed at "interconnection" and "collaboration" among the existing telecentres in the Asia-Pacific region to empower the poor and disadvantaged communities.

The objective of the project was to empower poor and disadvantaged communities; women in particular, through transforming selected existing ICT access points into knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks, providing developing, organizing, sharing and disseminating knowledge pertinent to these communities. The total budget allocated for the project as a whole was US$ 970,000 with a timeframe of thirty six months.

The project was implemented by the five Regional Commissions of the United Nations: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). ESCAP, in co-operation with ECE, had implemented the project in the Central Asian subregion as part the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of the Central Asia (SPECA) which was agreed between ECE, ESCAP and ESCWA during the inception meeting held in ESCWA from 14 to 17 November 2006.

Thus, there were some changes in ESCAP implementation plan. The inception meeting of the project, which had identified a set of seven activities to be carried out by ESCAP (A review and assessment of existing ICT access points; Setting a global framework and detailed implementation plan; Implementation of global/regional networks; Launching knowledge networks amongst stakeholders; Transformation of access points into knowledge hubs; Activating knowledge hubs and engaging beneficiaries and Project evaluation and feedback).

While ESCAP had already initiated implementing its activities it proposed changes in the implementation plan (28 October 2008). The reasons for proposed changes in ESCAP implementation plan were to:

- Revise timeframe for the implementation of remaining activities of the project.

- Keep the momentum of the activities of the network and take opportunity of synergies with other telecentre network initiatives in the region.

- Take the opportunity of the ESCAP First Session of the Committee on ICT and the high participation of ICT senior officials of countries in the region to formally launch the Asia-Pacific Knowledge Network of Telecentres.

- Take opportunity of the participation of the majority of the members of the Asia-Pacific Network in the Telecentre Forum of the e-Asia 2008 to convene a consultative meeting of the network to discuss its activation.

The change of ESCAP plan did not have any implication on the budget. Overall ESCAP implementation plan was to carry out following activities:

- One review and Assessment[3],

- Two regional stakeholders meetings,

- One network consultative meetings ,

- Three regional workshops for knowledge-hubs, and

- Project evaluation and feedback.

1.2 Purpose

Evaluation is essential to measure and assess the project performance, to learn and share experiences and to decide the actions that need to be taken to secure the sustainability once the project get completed. Following the same principle, the purpose of the present evaluation is to assess the performance of outcomes of the project (KN4DC) after its completion. This evaluation has been carried out as per the Terms of Reference (ToR) provided by ESCAP.

This draft report presents the final evaluation of the project. The report briefly presents an overview of project achievements and outcomes, project accomplishments, its relevancy, efficiency effectiveness and sustainability. It also highlights on the outputs of the project and their impact on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This report also presents other assessments such as the global and regional knowledge managers' performances, assessment of

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[3] Another review report was prepared by ECE for Europe and Central Asia bin August 2007.

the impact of activities, especially on the three key stakeholder categories: poor, disadvantaged communities and women. The report also provides information on the established regional networks, its functioning and activities briefly. The draft report lists the key regional good practices, some key regional challenges and lessons learned, conclusions, and also provide some recommendations.

1.3 Objectives

The evaluation has two main objectives: 1) to assess the achievements, outcomes and impact of the regional implementation of the KN4DC project in the light of the goals, objectives and expected accomplishments as per the project document and regional implementation plan and 2) to identify future actions which could help promote the results of the project at the regional level and maximize its chances of sustainability.

1.4 Outputs

The outputs of the evaluation assignment, as required by the ToR are:

- Submission of draft outline of the report to ESCAP by 20 April, 2010,
- Submission of the first draft of the report to ESCAP by 22 May 2010,
- Final draft report (addressing comments) submission to ESCAP by 28 May 2010, and
- Finalization of the report and submission to ESCAP by 14 June 2010.

1.5 Scope

The scope of this assignment consists predominantly of desk review of documents related with the project and a questionnaire survey targeting the focal points of member countries who have participated in regional workshops as part of the activities of the project. Information provided by Regional Networks, through exchange of emails and other communication medium, as deemed necessary, within the time period mentioned in the ToR, also included in the review.

2. METHODOLOGY

A methodology composed of five components was adopted in evaluating the project.

- Review of documents,
- Formal and informal consultations with regional team and partners,
- Questionnaire survey,
- Face to face meeting with the information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction division of ESCAP (IDD) Staff, and
- Review the web portal developed for the ESCAP region[4] and other regions under the project.

2.1 Review of documents

A number of documents were reviewed, which have highlighted the project details including its achievements. The list of documents that were reviewed is provided in annex 1. All relevant Web portals were considered for obtaining additional information about the project.

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[4] ESCAP region or Asia-Pacific region refers to 58 member states of ESCAP including the countries in Central Asia.

2.2 Face to face meeting with IDD staff and review of web portals

Contacts were made with the officials of IDD, especially those who were involved in the conceptualization and later implementation of the project. Emails and other communication channels were used to obtain specific information on the project activities from previous consultant who has worked on the project. The list of personnel who were contacted is given in annex 2.

Power point presentation, especially focused on findings of the evaluation, was also made to the officials of IDD on 26 May 2010.

2.3 Questionnaire survey

A series of questionnaires were designed based on information contained in the project document, progress reports, and the evaluation questionnaire of regional workshops. The questionnaires were prepared specifically for groups such as regional telecentre networks (Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network) as well as national telecentre networks focal points, telecentre operators/ promoters, managers, national telecentre officers/ country focal points. The questionnaire targeted for participants/ focal officers is given in Annex 3 (a) and the one prepared for APTN is presented in Annex 3 (b). These tasks were carried out in coordination with a project focal manager/ point assigned by IDD/ ESCAP.

Seventy nine (79) respondents (telecentre operators/ promoters, managers, national telecentre officers/ country focal points) from 30 countries, who have participated in at least one regional meeting, were requested to complete a questionnaire. The contact addresses were obtained from the IDD staff. The questionnaire was sent to them on 4 May 2010 by email and a follow up request was also sent by email to all of them on 10 May 2010. Follow up of the questionnaire survey, by direct telephone calls to some 39 individuals, was also made.

2.4 Limitations

The evaluation had some limitations in receiving on time the responses of questionnaire survey from the country focal points / network operators/ telecentre networks. Of the total (79), 21 emails were bounced back. Many respondents had either shifted to other organizations / Department and others have changed their email address. The response rate was low - only (11) was completed and returned. Therefore, the evaluation findings are based on some primary and largely on available secondary information.

3. FINDINGS

The findings are based on the activities carried out by the projects over the period (2006-2009).

3.1 Overview of the Project Achievements

Towards accomplishing the project objectives, following are some of the key project activities and achievements over the project period:

- *The Assessment of the Status of the Implementation and Use of ICT Access Points in Asia-Pacific* was the first activity undertaken by the project. This assessment report was finalized in March 2007. The study covered a total of 74 telecentre projects in 16 countries (excluding Central Asia). It identified best practices of ICT access-points initiatives, knowledge hubs and existing Knowledge Networks, and made recommendations for focus areas for knowledge networks and network hubs and nodes. The report revealed that several telecentres had required infrastructure to acquire and disseminate information and knowledge and were in a good position to act as knowledge

hubs in a knowledge network of telecentres. Similar study entitled "*Knowledge Network through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities-Assessment and Review in Europe and Central Asia*" finalized in August 2007, covered a total of 37 projects in 22 countries. This assessment also identified best practices of ICT access points' initiatives, knowledge-hubs and existing knowledge networks. It analyzed opportunities as well as challenges faced by these initiatives, made recommendations.

- Following this, a *Consultative Meeting for the Establishment of Regional Knowledge Network of Telecentres in Asia-Pacific* was organized in Bangkok in September 2007. The meeting was attended by 22 participants from various telecentre stakeholders, including telecentre operators, telecentre networks, government agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector.

- A similar *Consultative Meetings for the Establishment of Regional Knowledge Network of Telecentres in Central Asia* was organized in Baku, Azerbaijan in May 2008. The meeting was attended by 27 participants from various telecentre stakeholders, including telecentre operators, telecentre networks, government agencies, international organizations, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector.

These two meetings shared experiences and best practices on telecentre operations and consulted the telecentre stakeholders on the establishment of knowledge networks of the telecentres in the region. The meetings adopted a strategy for the regional knowledge network of telecentres. Specifically, among others, there were two solid achievements: 1) the consultative meeting held in Bangkok considered establishment of the telecentre/knowledge network in Asia-Pacific and Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) of Sri Lanka offered to host the network voluntarily, and 2) the consultative meeting held in Baku, Azerbaijan considered establishment of the telecentre/ knowledge network in Central Asia and International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) offered to host this network voluntarily.

Besides these achievements, an *Expert Group Meeting on the Provision of ICT Access for Disadvantaged Communities through Public Private Partnership* was organized in Bangkok on 12-14 December 2007. The meeting was attended by many of the APTN members. Similarly, *a network consultative meeting for Asia-Pacific region* was organized during the e-Asia 2008 conference, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2008. The meeting discussed the activation of the network and provided consultative, problem-solving support for identified issues to knowledge network members. This was followed by the launching of the "*Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network*" (APTN). The launching of this network took place at the *First Session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology* of ESCAP held in Bangkok from 19 to 21 November 2008.

In 2009, three workshops were organized including the launching of the Eurasia Telecentre Network (formerly Central Asia Telecentre Network).

- The *Regional Workshop for Knowledge-hubs in the Asia-Pacific Region* was organized in Nanjing, China in September 2009. The workshop was attended by 31 representatives of various telecentre stakeholders, knowledge hubs, and government agencies from Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Representatives of Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT), Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS), International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network (APTN), which is hosted by ICTA, also participated in the workshop. The workshop discussed ways and means to equip the telecentre/ knowledge hubs and national networks through information and knowledge sharing. The meeting outlined a number of recommendations for action by the Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network (APTN) as well as by the national governments and international/ intergovernmental organizations including ESCAP.

The Regional Workshop was effective in recommending the sustainability aspect of established networks.

- The *Regional Workshop for Knowledge-hubs in Central Asia and Neighbouring Countries* was organized in Dushanbe, Tajikistan in October 2009. The workshop was attended by 27 representatives of various ICT access point stakeholders, such as managers of various national ICT access point networks, government officers responsible for ICT access point issues, and government agencies from Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and USA. Representatives of ECE and IDRC and three resource persons from China, Germany and Thailand also participated in the Workshop. During the meeting, participants discussed the issues related to telecentres and knowledge hub and networks, shared their experiences and recognized importance of having a regional network of existing ICT access points (telecentres) for the purpose of: exchanging best practices and lessons learnt in their management of ICT access points; improving visibility of their ICT access points; sharing information with various partners and stakeholders; sharing of training materials and other capacity-building opportunities, among others. At this meeting, the *Eurasia Telecentre Network*, (formerly known as Central Asia Telecentre) which represents Central Asian countries and some European countries, was also launched.

Regional workshop at Dushanbe was effective in acknowledging the importance and usefulness of establishing a regional network of existing ICT access points (telecentres) for the purpose of: exchanging best practices and lessons learnt in the management of ICT access points; improving visibility of their ICT access points; sharing information with various partners and stakeholders; sharing of training materials and other capacity-building opportunities, among others. The workshops were also effective in acknowledging the importance of partnership with government and the private sector for the future development and management of ICT access points.

- The third and final activity was the *Regional Workshop for Knowledge hubs and Networks-Next Step*. This workshop was organized in Bangkok in December 2009. The workshop was attended by 32 representatives of various ICT access point stakeholders, such as managers of various national ICT access points from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, and Thailand. In addition, six representatives from UNDP, ITU, PIFS, SOPAC and IDRC participated in the Workshop.

The above-mentioned final regional workshop looked at the sustainability aspects of two established regional networks, among others. The workshop was very effective in recognizing women to become entrepreneurs as well as catalysts for development and also the leadership role in the local community.

The workshop attempted to address the (i) tangible benefits to rural communities through knowledge sharing and networking; (ii) progress of the transformation form community access points to knowledge hubs and new services offered; (iii) role of regional networks in value added services to communities; (v) involvement of the poor and disadvantaged groups (including women) in accessing benefits from knowledge hub/ networks; (v) effective resource mobilization for sustainable knowledge hubs/ networks; (vi) role of public-private partnership and the community in sustainability of knowledge hub/ networks; and (vii) challenges in the process of establishing knowledge/ hubs/networks.

3.2 Production of knowledge products

Besides the above mentioned activities, the KN4DC project also produced number of knowledge products designed to improve the implementation and understanding of knowledge networks. Some of the key knowledge products produced under the project were: 1) Design and development of knowledge management strategy, 2) Norm, standard and contents for the ESCAP knowledge portal and information system, and 3) Newsletter articles.

3.3 Partnership building

Within the project period, ESCAP successfully built partnership with ICTA, IREX, IDRC-Telecentre.org and the Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies (CSDMS).

The project has also enabled the United Nations Regional Commissions to collaborate on a common project and strengthen their links.

The project has developed synergy through participation in ICT forums/ events such as Telecentre Fora in e-Asia 2008 (Malaysia) and e-Asia 2009 (Sri Lanka).

3.4 Project Timeframe

All the project activities have been accomplished reasonably on time. This is one of the indicators of a successful project management. Table 1 below shows completion date of project's activities:

Table1: Summary of activity scheduled and their completion time[5].

Activity	Status
Review and Assessment	Report on the Implementation and Use of ICT Access Points in Asia and the Pacific. March 2007[6].
Regional stakeholders meeting in Asia-Pacific	Organized in September 2007, Bangkok, Thailand.
Regional stakeholders meeting in Central Asia	Organized in May 2008, Baku, Azerbaijan.
Network consultative meeting in Asia-Pacific region	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2008, (e-Asia 2008 Conference).
Regional Workshop for Knowledge-hubs in the Asia-Pacific region	Organized in September 2009, Nanjing, China.
Regional Workshop for Knowledge-hubs in Central Asia and Neighbouring Countries	Organized in October 2009, Dushanbe, Tajikistan.
Regional Workshop for Knowledge	Organized in December 2009, Bangkok, Thailand.

[5] The Consultative meeting organized in Bangkok, Thailand in Sept 2007 and the regional workshop organized in Nanjing, China in September 2009 did not invite any participant from Central Asia since separate meetings were organized with special focus to the countries of Central Asia.

[6] Similar report was prepared by ECE for Europe and Central Asia

hubs and Networks-Next Step	
Project Evaluation and feed-back	April-May 2010.

3.5 Progress towards Achievements of Project Outcomes

3.5.1 Expected achievements and outcomes

According to the project document, three main outcomes were expected from the implementation of project activities: 1) establishment of global/ regional knowledge network(s) for community development 2) transforming ICT access points (centres) from conventional access centre into smart knowledge hubs and 3) increased engagement of beneficiaries, women in particular, in poor areas and disadvantaged communities in knowledge hubs. The accomplishment of each activity against its indicator is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of project expectation and actual accomplishments

EA1: Established global/regional knowledge network(s) for community development.

Indicators of achievements	**Actual Achievements**
IA1.1: Number of established global/regional networks for the different priority areas.	IA1.1: Two networks were established. *Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network* (November 2008) and *Eurasia Telecentre Network*, (formerly named as Central Asia Telecentre Network (October 2009). Both the networks have opened up website and are working towards an inclusive and policy oriented approach. Both the networks have increased the awareness and knowledge of poor and disadvantaged communities on access to improved information and knowledge.
IA1.2: Number of identified value-added services based on the established knowledge networks.	Quantitatively, four different types of value added services were identified on the established knowledge networks. They were 1) advocacy of the telecentre movement in the Asia-Pacific Region, 2) various types of training 3) developments of knowledge products related to different priority areas, and 4) facilitation to policy reforms.
	With maturity of telecentres and knowledge hubs, value added services tend to get more complex. Besides, the nature of services also depends on the country. For example, in China, knowledge hubs provide one stop agriculture information services to farmers, bridging the gap between the farmers and local agriculture credit co-operatives and provide market information on agricultural products. China Youth Development Foundation provides business training. Additionally, social workers are sharing their experience on "home-left children" through e-education, e-meetings.
	In case of Lao People's Democratic Republic, school teachers are benefited in their professional development through effective access.
	Information access to research archive on socioeconomic issues for policy development services are provided in Mongolia as value added service.

	The capacity building workshop/ meetings have helped in formulating network service strategy to meet local people needs, influenced in establishing a new network and advocate other public libraries to have a telecentre in Mongolia.
	In India, they provide, Banking and micro credit information, micro insurance, vocational training, micro libraries and on-line e-payment facilities.
	In Malaysia, training is provided to single mothers to market their produce on-line while in Indonesia, ICT services are provided to impaired people and ICT for women.
	In Bhutan, the Ministry of Agriculture is planning to link research and extension through a virtual extension and research communication network. Knowledge hubs will be the sources of information in this endeavor.
	Birth certificates, passports and visas support is provided through knowledge centers in Fiji.
	Thaitelcentre.org is providing some value added services to telecentres as there is heaps of knowledge already available under the APTN.
IA1.3: Number of parties actively involved in the established networks.	Twenty five (25) parties were actively involved in the established networks.

EA2: Enriched value proposition of ICT access points through their transformation into knowledge hubs.

Indicators of achievements	Actual Achievements
IA2.1: Number of officials from governments/ municipalities from participating countries involved in the launch of the Knowledge networks.	Sixty (60) high level officials from 16 countries of the Asia-Pacific region and representatives from several UN Bodies and other organizations attended the official launch of the Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network on 19 November 2008. Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP formally opened up the Network in Bangkok, Thailand.
	Twenty seven (27) high level officials representing government and telecentre networks, private sector and representatives from UN bodies and other entity attended the launch of the Eurasia Telecentre Network on 21 October 2009 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.
IA2.2: Number of transformed ICT access points into knowledge hubs;	There is no exact figure on the number of transformed ICT points into knowledge hubs because there appears a definitional discrepancy between 'telecentres' and 'knowledge hubs' among member countries. Nonetheless, questionnaire survey (May 2010) and other secondary sources reveals that 52% of telecentres in Bangladesh are transformed to knowledge hubs,

	48% in China, 50% in government India initiated programmes, 29% in Malaysia, almost all community ecenters in Bhutan. Furthermore, the focus of the project in Asia-Pacific region was networking" and "training" for the "selected existing telecentres/knowledge hubs", rather than directly investing the limited funds and efforts in transforming few ICT access points into knowledge hubs as agreed at the project inception meeting held in Beirut in November 2006. For that, ECE and ESCAP had jointly requested which was approved through budget revision.
IA2.3: Number of new services offered by knowledge hubs to the respective communities.	A number of new services have been offering by telecentres. Most telecentres are offering e-education and e-health. The type of service and their scale differs. For example, Mongolia offers basic training, e-government services, library services, participation in public events, access information/ knowledge and video sessions on health, education and child care whereas e-banking in Pakistan.

EA3: Increased engagement of beneficiaries in poor areas and disadvantaged communities in knowledge hubs.

Indicators of achievements	Actual Achievements
IA3.1: Number of beneficiaries in poor areas and in disadvantaged communities engaged in the established knowledge networks.	The APTN and ETN currently have 20 national telecentre networks / organizations representing about 10,000 telecentres/ ICT access points in Asia-Pacific region thereby an estimated 15 million persons in rural and disadvantaged communities could be considered as the beneficiaries.
IA3.2: Number of women in poor areas and disadvantaged communities benefiting from the established knowledge networks.	IA3.2: It is difficult to exactly figure out the number of women, in particular, in poor areas and disadvantaged community benefiting from the established knowledge networks. Nonetheless, the secondary data source (Questionnaire survey, 2009) suggests that the present trend of women's involvement in knowledge hubs is increasingly high. In Bangladesh and China alone more than 5 million women are directly benefiting from knowledge hubs. It is difficult to estimate the numbers in India but in 5 India states 45,000 women were exposed to e-literacy through 295 knowledge hubs. The success rate achieved is quoted as 98%. In Malaysia, more than 500 single mothers have participated in ICT associated business development skills programmes (Questionnaire survey, 2009). In two provincial e-centers of Mongolia over 100 women have participated in knowledge hub activities. In one network of Mongolia, about 10 percent of its users are disadvantaged people, including single mother, children and disabled people. The pattern of users tends to be mostly low affordable people

	(Questionnaire survey, 2010).
	Although basic data on the use of telecentre in Nepal is not correctly available but observation shows that poor and disadvantaged communities benefits from sharing of information (Questionnaire survey, 2010).
	According to one estimate over 55% of the knowledge hub users in Philippines are women. These estimates indicate that knowledge hubs are playing a crucial role in women's empowerment among the regional countries. Similar is the case with other countries of Asia-pacific region.
IA3.3: Number of success stories resulting from established networks.	Both APTN and ETN are newly established Networks. It is still premature to have success stories from these networks. However, APTN recently have organized e-Jaffna event (May 2010) to make aware rural communities of Jaffna Peninsula.

The above accomplishment Table 2 shows that the project has been successful in its endeavour. Efforts were made in interconnecting and collaborating focal points and other communities through networking and capacity development. Capacity development of networking partners is one of the pre-requisite to the transformation of telecentres into knowledge hubs.

The project was concerned with establishing global/ regional knowledge networks and transforming telecentres into knowledge hubs related to priority areas of poor and disadvantaged communities and women. Unlike other projects, which provide various types of support, it has not provided any financial support to ICT access points/ telecentres. The approach and/or modality taken by the project is quite unique, yet it has been able to achieve its objectives through interconnection and collaboration among telecentre networks as well as national telecentre networks focal points, telecentre operators/ promoters, managers, national telecentre officers and country focal points in the region. One of the essences of this project was to develop the capacity of these partners as capacity development is pre-requisite to the transformation of telecentres and ICT access points into knowledge hubs.

The networking models and their functions vary depending on the country. For example, the ThaiTelecentre's current number is 300 and is expected to be 1000 by the end of the year 2010. These are classified into three types: 1) telecentre Champion operator network; 2) stakeholder networks, and 3) consultancy networks, depending on the network's functions.

3.6 Relevance, efficiency effectiveness and sustainability of project outputs:

The relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the project outputs have been examined in this evaluation by the following four leading points.

- Were the project objectives and outcomes relevant for target beneficiaries?
- Have human and financial resources been used effectively to deliver activities and outputs?
- Have the planned outputs of the project been achieved?
- What is the likely hood that the positive effects of the project will continue into the future?

3.6.1 Relevance

The project activities have been relevant for target beneficiaries. In all the capacity development workshop and consultative meetings the main target beneficiaries have been telecentre networks, stakeholders, ICT access points focal officers and government agencies, although other stakeholders are also benefited.

A first step to ensure relevant project outcomes was to select the capacity development issue as one of the key activities of the project. The project has chosen empowering poor and disadvantaged communities through enhancing the capacity of telecentre operators/ country focal points of the already existed networking in the Asia-Pacific region, which would in turn addresses the needs of these communities

The project was able to establish two regional networks: Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network (APTN), and Eurasia Telecentre Network (former Central Asia Telecentre Network). The activities carried out by both these networks have been relevant for target beneficiaries.

Questionnaire-based feedback from workshop participants obtained by ESCAP (December 2009) indicates that the choices of issues and content/ quality of presentations at various capacity development workshops were considered relevant for participants.

Additionally, the questionnaire survey conducted for this study (May 2010) highlights that participants have benefited attending the various capacity building meetings organized by the project sharing the best practices from general discussions and parallel meetings. Specifically, participants from China have reported that the inputs from the meetings were very relevant to Chinese farmers in terms of information on agriculture market price. The meetings were also very relevant in launching a field study in 8 provinces in China between the months of February 20-March 20, 2010. Chinese participants will set up least 5 pilot HOPE Telecentres in the year 2010 which will cater at least one million targeted populations. Besides, HOPE Centres will be set up in 16680 HOPE schools all around the country (Questionnaire survey 2010). Participant from Thailand and Nepal reported that that e-Asia meeting was very relevant and were benefited from cross-learning.

Participants from Central Asia, especially Georgia, benefited sharing and exchanging information with other organizations (APTN, IDRC)

3.6.2 Efficiency

The administration of the project has been very well handled. Project activities have been completed on time. In a number of occasions, the project took advantages of potential cost-savings and synergies with other activities, for example the launching of the "*Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network*" took place at the First session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology held in Bangkok from 19 to 21 November 2008. Similarly, the launching of Eurasia Telecentre Network was organized during the *Regional Workshop for Knowledge-hubs in Central Asia and Neighbouring Countries* in Dushanbe, Tajikistan in October 2009.

3.6.3 Effectiveness

The project has achieved all the planned outputs. The outputs consist of 1) assessment study, 2) capacity building workshops, 3) networking, 4) establishment of networks, and 5) production of knowledge products. The project has organized six important capacity building workshops in Asia-Pacific region and Central Asia. One hundred and thirty nine (139) persons from around 30 countries, and representatives form international organizations have participated the capacity

building workshops. More than 66 percent of the project funds were used for capacity building workshops. The project objectives were shared at various forums (e-Asia 2008, Malaysia; e-Asia 2009, Sri Lanka).

It has successfully built partnership with IDRC and CSDMS. The project has also enabled the United Nations Regional Commissions to collaborate on a common project and strengthen their links.

Feedbacks from participants show a high level of appreciation for the content and organization of the workshops (e.g. Regional Workshop for Knowledge-hubs and Network – Next Step 10-11 December 2009, Bangkok, Thailand). The workshops had brought out the regional dimensions of the networking issues.

The KN4DC project also produced number of knowledge products designed to improve the implementations and understanding of knowledge networks. The project provided ample opportunities for networking at the national, regional and global level. The documents throw ample light on development of knowledge management strategy, standard and norms. All the project related activities are accessible at the project website (www.unescap.org/idd/kn/index.asp).

The project's web portal (www.unescap.org/idd/kn/index.asp) is linked with both Regional Networks: APTN (http://a-ptnetwork.ning.com) and ETN (www.telecentre-eurasia-english.ning.com). APTN is further linked with other web portals such as telecentre.org. The linkage indicates that the project's outcomes have been effective.

3.6.4 Sustainability

ESCAP used workshop evaluations to inquire whether participants would follow-up accomplishing the outcome of the meeting. All 27 participants in the final workshop (10-11 December 2009, Bangkok, Thailand) responded that they would follow the recommendations made at the workshop. To cite but example, Chinese participants were involved in policy making process through National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference's proposal as a follow-up of the meeting. Thai participants tried to push their champion network's member to join various meetings and works closely with Ministry of Information and Communication for bringing out any new policy about Thaitelecentre.

Financial sustainability of the established regional networks is one of the major challenges once the project gets completed. However, sustainability of the established regional networks is assured as ICTA and IREX, who have shown their keen interest in establishing the secretariat for APTN and ETN respectively. IREX is taking the lead on the website and network. A proposal is being developed for the establishment of country based telecentre network. APTN has a Steering Committee responsible for guiding on the work of the secretariat of the network. ESCAP has already established partnership with IDRC- Telecentre.org and CSDMS. IDRC have offered allowing the full access by the network to the services products that have been developed under the telecentre.org programme. The "cookbook" on telecentre networking to be made available to the members of the network by IDRC and Telecentre Magazine published by CSDMS are seen as a step towards the sustainability of the established networks.

The existence of a sustainability plan (2010-11) and an operational business plan (2010-2015) of APTN can be considered as one of the steps towards financial sustainability.

There could be various models for sustainability. For example, involvement of private sector only, public private partnership but experience elsewhere suggests that telecentres networks are considered to be sustainable in the long run if their socioeconomic impact and the opportunity

cost of alternative modes of delivery are realized. A successful model could be a corporate one. In other words, sustainability of telecentres networks is the acceptance and subsequently the use of their services by the communities. As the established networks are trying towards these lines sustainability can be assured.

3.7 Other assessments

3.7.1 The impact on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The MDGs, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) have set standards for sustainable development. The eight MDGs for reducing poverty and meeting basic human needs were adopted in September 2000.Telecentres could contribute in achieving many of the MDGs, especially eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

In this connection, the project has established two regional networks. *Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network* and *Eurasia Telecentre Network* (formerly named as Central Asia Telecentre Network). Four value added services such as advocacy of the telecentre movement in the Asia-Pacific Region, different types training knowledge products development related to different priority areas and facilitating the policy reforms were identified.

Although it is difficult to link this progress in poverty reduction to any specific community based ICT initiative, the general objectives of the established telecentres was headed towards achieving the MDGs. Poverty reduction (MDG 1) is the most frequently cited objective in all telecentres among the eight goals particularly in South Asian countries. The other MDG goals i.e. providing access to online learning (MDG 2); empowering women entrepreneurs (MDG 3); ensure universal access to ICT (MDG 7); and establish knowledge networks (MDG 8) are also a common objective in establishing telecentre networks. Assessment of the Status of the Implementation and Use of ICT Access Points in Asia and the Pacific also indicates that all the eight MDGs goals are reflected in the objectives of setting up telecentres in the Asia-Pacific region (ESCAP, 2007).

3.7.2 Other impacts

Regarding the enriched value proposition of ICT access points through their transformation into knowledge hubs, the project has organized six capacity building workshops and consultation meetings in Asia-Pacific region including Central Asia mainly focusing on how ICT access points, knowledge-hubs and telecentre / knowledge networks benefit form information and knowledge sharing and networking, contribute to inclusive and sustainable development paradigm and share best practices on programmes at different levels and relevant policies and institutional experiences. These meetings have enriched value proposition for different stakeholder categories.

Empowerment of poor women is practiced through various endeavors such as tele-training, employment information, micro credit programme, general health check ups maternal and child care, gynecological examination. It has been estimated that out of the 14 million internet subscribers in Philippines, 55 % are women beneficiaries (Questionnaire Survey Report, 2009).

3.7.2 The performance of global and regional knowledge managers

There are two reports prepared by Global and Regional Knowledge Managers. Both reports have the same title "Empowering poor and disadvantaged communities through the transformation of existing ICT access points in selected countries into knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks". The Global report was produced by Ms. Stephanie Hodge, Consultant, ESCWA,

Global Knowledge Manager (Hodge, 2009) whereas the Regional one was by Mr. Patrick Breard, ESCAP consultant, in consultation with the IDD-ESCAP (Breard, 2009).

ESCWA had contracted Ms. Hodge to provide global consultancy services and support to the project "Empowering poor and disadvantaged communities through the transformation of existing ICT access points in selected countries into knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks." The project's objective was to strengthen the capacity of disadvantaged communities in five UN regional commissions' domains in order to connect and share information, perspectives and experience through creation of global and regional networks.

The Global Knowledge Manager was involved in the various key activities towards global project achievements including:

- Providing support of creation of a d-group as the communication and reference for exchanging resources globally and communicating with project team members;

- Developing report on norms, standards and content for the ESCAP knowledge portal and information systems;

- Producing a strategic report on the promotion and sustainability of knowledge networks;

- Making recommendations for the preliminary design of a Global Knowledge Portal; and

- Identifying potential partners to support the community of telecentres—solution exchange and *telecentre.org* among others.

The report highlights the project's value added in the four regions and its good practices. The report provides overview of the project achievements; reviews the global good practices, outlines of the main challenges and lessons learnt based on the distinct regional experiences, and recommends on sustainability/exit. It is good to read the global project achievements under separate headings but the acronym used in the document (UNLAC) for ECLAC is confusing. Similarly, some regional good practices have been listed in the document.

Both the documents are comprehensive and provide project activities and achievements in great detail linking with the expected achievements. The documents also provide key Regional good practices and key Regional challenges/ lessons learned.

3.7.3 Impact of improved access to information on the three key stakeholder categories: poor, disadvantaged communities and women.

There is a positive but indirect impact on these three key stakeholder categories. The impact is derived from the strengthened networking, knowledge exchange and mutual support capacity that telecentre operators have been able to gain from meeting and working together.

Few anecdotal evidences suggests that farmers have been able to get a better price for their produce through advance information on market prices, empowerment of rural farmers in China through access to rural micro credit intermediately services, improvements of rural health care through rural health care information systems in China and empowerment of women in Malaysia and Indonesia through ICT training (Annual Progress Report, 2009).

The project HOPE TELECENTRE, in China, is supporting local community development through the promotion of sustainable education development. Technology is considered as resource in local community, a form of social capital that contributes to the quality of life. Rural

and disadvantaged communities have benefited from information disseminated by media (People Daily, China Youth Daily, and CCTV).

The impact of improved access to information due to the project activities can be drawn from the questionnaire survey carried out during the Regional Workshop for Knowledge hubs and Networks - Next Step held Bangkok, Thailand from 10 to 11 December 2009. The workshop was instrumental in generating information on the involvement of the poor and disadvantaged groups (including women) in accessing benefits from knowledge hubs/ networks through a questionnaire survey (Regional Workshop for Knowledge hubs and Networks - Next Step, December 2009). The recent questionnaire survey (May 2010) also supports that poor and disadvantaged communities are beneficiaries of the project outcomes. The ripple effect is huge. For example, in Azerbaijan, telecentres are only the socially acceptable place outside the home where parents would allow their children to spend time outside university and school.

Some of the impacts were derived as:

- Opportunities provided for women to become entrepreneurs as well as catalyst for development in the community,

- Opportunities created to search for jobs, obtain training on new professions and be more socially active,

- Opportunities for becoming a local leader in the local community,

- Use of telcentre itself for various purposes i.e. meeting place, training centre and a platform for raising awareness in large spectrum of issues: health (maternal and child care), education, social issues (employment information, training), disaster preparedness, and economic activities (micro credit programme), among others.

- Opportunities created through empowering innovations (ICT Online training package, the SME Online training package) and linking these with global telecentre academy.org and with Thai Cyber University.

It has been reported that the project outcomes had positive impact on the poor and disadvantaged communities and especially women on their daily livelihood through their enhanced knowledge on savings, income generation thereby raising living standard as mentioned in the bullet points above although it was difficult to measure quantitatively. Additionally, it should be noted that project outcomes might have played a positive role on access to information but the country wise figures could be the effect of other on-going ICT endeavors. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that some ICT development initiatives/ activities have already been in place in the respective countries.

3.7.4 Regional Knowledge Networks

The KN4DC project has established two regional networks. The "Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network" (APTN) and "Eurasia Telecentre Network" (ETN) formerly have known as Central Asia Telecentre Network.

3.7.4.1 Asia-Pacific Telecentre Network (APTN)

The APTN is a collaborative initiative of telecentre.org and the ESCAP. Its secretariat was set up in February 2009 during the First National Nenasala (Knowledge Centre) Convention at

Colombo, Sri Lanka and its secretariat is also located in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The network has its own web-portal (http://a-ptnetwork.ning.com). The objective of this network is to promote innovation and knowledge-sharing amongst Telecentre organizations in the Asia-Pacific region. APTN is serving as the focal network or the knowledge hub for communication and information technology in the Asia-Pacific region.

APTN is a network of networks. Currently it has 95 online members in its web portal, including representatives from more than 20 different organizations and telecentre networks. These members are essentially telecentre operators or telecentre networks or organizations involved in development of telecentres in the region. Members have various awareness programmes and capacity building programmes to enhance knowledge of their communities. Poor and disadvantaged communities are the main focus of them. It coordinates with its members through its web portals and uses its Google group mail and social network pages (Face book, Twitter, My space).

APTN has limited number of active participants which include members from India, Philippines and Bangladesh. Thaitelecentre.org is also a member of APTN and shares its knowledge with APTN through interaction meetings. APTN welcomes members from Asia-Pacific region who are actively involved with telecentre activities and ICT4D initiatives. It also encourages membership from outside Asia-Pacific region with the idea that it will help improve the quality of knowledge sharing. Membership is attended instantaneously when a network joins APTN and free of cost.

The network plays a very important role in empowering the poor and the disadvantaged communities to enhance knowledge and value added services as innovators of these services, as promoters and orchestrators by offering support to networks that work directly with these communities. It has so far organized a resource mobilization workshop for telecentre activists from various organizations all over the world, funded and supported by telecentre.org which was coincided e-Asia conference held in Sri Lanka in December 2009, Jaffna e-Society Day on 5th May 2010, in Jaffna Sri Lanka.

It has already established a strong link with telecentre.org. and is planning to sustain its activities through aligning itself with telecentres.org. APTN has developed linkages with other international networks in other regions such as ATN in Brazil, Gedaref digital city organization in Sudan, Afriklinks in Mali, Ugabytes Initiatives in Uganda and Egypt ICT Trust Fund in Egypt.

APTN conducts online forums/ online consultations with its members to identify the needs of telecentres users. In addition, it considers feedbacks, suggestions and requests that they receive from the telecentre members. APTN aims to provide knowledge sharing, consultancy services, capacity building and facilitate exchange visits to its members. One of the interesting and valuable content of this network is its online consultation regarding the strengthening network (*Telcentre Magazine,* Vol. II, Issue 5, January-March 2009).

The questionnaire survey (May 2009) revealed that all this has become possible as:

- Sri-Lankan representative participated the capacity building workshops/ meetings organized by ESCAP and developed, shared the importance of establishing a regional network,

- ICTA provided housing facilities for APTN Secretariat,

- ICTA programme head managing web development, and

- Other international organizations paid the salary of community facilitator for one year 9 March 2009-March 2010).

Although APTN has not been able to start rural awareness events outside Sri Lanka, but within the country, the network assists ICTA programmes in empowering the disadvantaged

communities. It has no funding support but planning to obtain from International Organizations such as telecntre.org foundation, ESCAP, and UNDP to sustain its activities. This indicates that APTN still needs support for expanding its activities.

Piyaratna and Perera, J.K. (2009) have listed some of strengthens and weakness of APTN (Table 3).

Table 3: Strengths and weaknesses of APTN.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Repository of knowledge in the country/ region, • Accurate & updated database of member networks, • Share best practices, lessons learned, success stories, • Web portal for easy access to all, and • Organizing networking and capacity building events.	Lack of commitment from members Lack of focal point

The above Table 3 above suggests that weakness of APTN might jeopardize its overall strengths unless they are addressed.

3.7.4.2 Eurasia Telecentre Network (ETN)

The Central Asia Telecentre Network (CATN) was established in May 2008. It was hosted by the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) voluntarily. As the result of the agreement of the participants of the workshop at the Regional Knowledge hubs in Central Asia and Neighbouring Countries held at Dushanbe, Tajikistan in October 2009. CATN was renamed as Eurasia Telecentre Network (ETN) and transformed from the national telecentre networks/ knowledge-hubs to the regional telecentre/ knowledge hubs network so as to share knowledge from Russian speaking counties in Europe in addition to the countries of Central Asia. It was expected that Afghanistan would be encouraged to become its members. The network was established by ESCAP in cooperation with UNECE.

The Eurasian Network of Telecentres (Spanning 12 countries in Asia and Europe,) was formed in order to provide telecentres and networks in Eurasia with opportunities to:

1. Increase participation and impact,

2. Exchange experience, knowledge, best practices, and assistance,

3. Increased resources and knowledge base,

4. Stay informed of latest news, trends, and opportunities,

5. Regional integration opportunities as a network and peace-building/open dialogue,

6. Reduce level of imbalance between countries with strong ICT policy ,

7. Support a policy-improving environment for the telecentre movement and influencing government to support it, from all levels, including citizen voices,

8. Raise standards of telecentre offerings, especially poorly funded communities,

9. Strengthen e-government efforts and transparency,

10. Make telecentre resources attractive to governments in need of increased internet access points,

11. Visibility to donors, and

12. Find all those interested in using an ICT4D for social improvement and build enthusiasm among members.

Eurasia Telecentre Network is in juvenile stage. Nonetheless, it has opened up its website (www.telecentre-eurasia-english.ning.com) in two versions: English and Russian. IREX is taking the lead on website and network (Mark Skogen, Personnel Comm., 14 May 2010; mskogen@irex.kz). Additionally, participants of Dushanbe meeting (October 2009) are ready to provide all information for the network's website. Although this network has some management challenge, it is planning to establish itself with the support from IDRC and other international organizations (Mahmud Naimov, Personnel Comm., 12 May 2010; mnaimov@irex.kz).

During the final/wrap-up workshop: Regional Workshop for Knowledge hubs and Networks-Next Step held at Bangkok in 10-12 December 2009, a special meeting on the Eurasia Telecentre Network was also held. The representative of Eurasia Telecentre Network has agreed 1) to create an inventory of telecentre and 2) to identify leaders to manage the network in different countries.

However, these two networks have improved the regional visibility for ESCAP through its functioning.

3.7.5 Regional Good Practices

Some of the strategic good practices achieved during the course of the project are highlighted below:-

3.7.5.1 Prioritizing the objectives

ESCAP moved the original project objectives upwards by recognizing that the telecentre movements had first to be strengthened and that the ability of such a project to empower poor and disadvantaged communities, women in particular, would first require enhancing the capacity of Telecentre operators.

3.7.5.2 Moving the project upstream

ESCAP has tried hard to develop an inclusive policy oriented approach to implementing the project. It has been exclusively pointed out during the workshop in China (September 2009) and Bangkok (December 2009). It has been experienced that telecentre operators have to be actively involved for projects to be successful as they have a key role to play in transforming programme objectives into action. Influencing the policy agenda and creating a policy environment supportive of free access to information and open flows of perspective and knowledge between communities is a key strategic enabler.

3.7.5.3 Sharing of ownership

ESCAP was able to transfer some ownership of the project to its partners-ICTA and IREX. The two partners have well internalized the overall objectives and the value of the project. This was especially spelled out during the Bangkok workshop 2009.

3.7.5.4 Regional Visibility

The project has gained a stronger visibility working with development partners at the regional level. It has tried to clear its vision through presenting papers in different forum, contributing news and articles to Telecentre Newsletters, and participating at various events (e-Asia 2008, e-Asia 2009).

The regional workshops organized by ESCAP during the project period and the final workshop in Bangkok has led telecentre operators, policy makers and other partners to agree on further collaborations that are mutually beneficial as well as to define a common set of activities and the next steps to be followed which are concrete and output oriented.

3.7.5.5 Key Regional Challenges (shortcomings)

Patrick Breard (2009), Regional Knowledge Manager, has raised some issues as the key regional challenges (shortcoming). It is not the purpose here to list them but rather to provide some additional ones.

- The project has accomplished all activities on time. Periodical assessments were done. But the project did not monitor the "recommendations" and "commitments" of the participants due to lack of staff and resources. To cite but examples, participants at the Regional Workshop for Knowledge-hubs in Asia Pacific Region at Nanjing, China in September 2009 have made a series of recommendations, some of them to be implemented by the participants themselves. Thus it would have been beneficial to measure quantitatively and find out if there were some gaps between the enhanced knowledge gained by the participants through participation in various capacity building workshops/ meetings organized by the project and its real field transformation.

3.7.5.6 Lessons Learned

Establishment of formal network of national telecentre networks has been considered a good practice in mobilizing telecentre stakeholders and ensuring sustainability of the knowledge network.

- Introduction of telecentre networks is best done with the support from the respective governments with a clear roll out plan to transfer the ownership to either private sector or user communities.

- Strengthening community ICT access points (telecentres) with value added services, is a step in the right direction to bridge the digital divide and empower the rural poor in Asia-Pacific region.
- Telecentre networks should balance between community services and profit orientation to be sustainable in the long run.

- Both financial and human resources are the biggest challenges for running of telecentre, and networking with core government agencies.

- Dedicated staff inputs, including support from business communities, support from local level government authorities are required to continue the project outcomes.

- Computer/ internet literacy should be increased. Language is one of the barriers in computer literacy. The cost of services should be affordable to general users. Government should facilitate access to information.

- Committed leadership and strong links among all levels of networks especially the implementing network that works at the local communities are required to overcome networking challenges.

- Results indicate that poor including women are the beneficiaries of the project outcomes.

- Organizational re-engineering of ESCAP, in the year 2008/2009, had directly affected in implementing the project activities due to staff shortage.

4. Conclusions

This chapter provides the conclusions of the evaluation, including general conclusions and conclusions relating to some of the specific performance and other criteria.

The project achievements indicated that Knowledge sharing experience among tele-centre stakeholders have proportionately increased. Knowledge gained has been translated into action. Increased number of telecentre networks/ knowledge hubs established in the region can bear testimony to knowledge exchange through regional meetings.

Within the project period, ESCAP successfully built partnership with ICTA, IREX, IDRC-Telecentre.org and the Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies (CSDMS). The project has also enabled the UN Regional Commissions to collaborate on a common project and strengthen their links. It has also developed synergy through participation in various ICT forums and events. This is certainly commendable in terms of "collaboration" and "interconnection"; the two key point of knowledge network. The regional meetings can be attributed to national advocacy activities among the telecentre networks.

The project outputs have brought improvements in the national, regional and global partnerships. It has carried out two assessment studies (including one by ECE), organized six capacity building workshops including a network consultative meeting in Malaysia. The project also produced number of knowledge products designed to improve the implementation and understanding of knowledge networks.

The administration of the project has been very well handled. More than 66 percent of the project funds were used for capacity building workshops. Project activities have been completed on time. In a number of occasions, the project took advantages of potential cost-savings and synergized with other activities.

The evaluation indicates that the project has directly enabled one hundred and thirty nine (139) national telecentre networks focal points, telecentre operators/ promoters, managers, national telecentre officers and country focal points in Asia-Pacific region from around 30 countries including Central Asia to become stronger at serving disadvantaged communities, women in particular.

The project was successful in establishing two regional networks: Asia-pacific Telecentre Network (http://a-ptnetwork.ning.com) (APTN) and Eurasia Telecentre Network (www.telecentre-eurasia-english.ning.com) (ETN) and linking its web portal to the web portals these networks. Both the networks currently have 20 national telecentre networks / organizations representing over 10,000 telecentres/ knowledge-hubs in Asia-Pacific region. An estimated 15 million persons in rural and disadvantaged communities are considered as the beneficiaries. Nonetheless, there is some concern about the continuity in updating the contents of the project's web portal in future as both human and financial resources may be ceased.

The evaluation indicated that telecentres / knowledge networks should be recognized by the user communities, should be able to create its own framework, should sustain the activities, and should have proactive members.

Sustainability of these established regional networks is assured as ICTA and IREX have shown their keen interest in hosting the networks: APTN and ETN, respectively. Nonetheless, the evaluation has indicated that the financial sustainability the established regional network is one of the major challenges. Additionally, there is a significant difference between the governance of these established telecentres. APTN appears more sustainable as it has Government patronage whereas ETN is still working on management structure of the network.

Although it is difficult to link MDGs goals directly in poverty reduction to any specific community based telecentre networks, poverty reduction (MDG 1) is the most frequently cited objective in the establishment.

The reports prepared by Global and Regional Knowledge Managers provide the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Telecentres Networks both from the functional and activity based standpoints.

The evaluation indicated that there is a positive but indirect impact of the project outputs on the poor, disadvantaged communities and particularly women on their daily livelihood through their enhanced knowledge on savings, income generation and societal. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that some ICT development initiatives/ activities have already been in place, before the project initiated its activities, and the overall impact could be spill over effect.

The sharing of experience within and between the participants with enhanced services like, e-governance, e-commerce, e-health, and e-learning, among others have made the community access points more useful. Overall the project has able to capture the "fragmented and inadequately utilized knowledge" of the user communities.

The implementation of the project activities could have been smoother should there had been adequate staff to carry out the expected activities on time and with matching resources.
In conclusion, the evaluation has indicated that the outputs of the project have both tangible and intangible impact to the poor, disadvantaged communities, including women. The capacity development workshops/ consultative meetings have enabled the national telecentre networks focal points, telecentre operators/ promoters, managers, national telecentre officers and country focal points in Asia-Pacific region including Central Asia to become stronger in empowering poor and better at serving disadvantaged communities, women in particular. The established regional networks are playing a very important role in empowering the poor and the disadvantaged communities to enhance knowledge and value added services as innovators of these services, as promoters and orchestrators by offering support to networks that work directly with these communities.

5 Recommendations

This chapter provides recommendations primarily based on the evaluation. A sound and robust list of recommendations were produced during the regional workshops especially in China and Bangkok (Regional Workshop for Knowledge-hubs in Asia-Pacific Region, 8-10 September 2009 Nanjing, China; Regional Workshop for Knowledge hubs and Networks-Next Step, early December 2009 in Bangkok). All these recommendations are very valid but based on the present evaluation and conclusions, a set of recommendations are presented here. It is expected that both regional networks and ESCAP in corporation with ECE and other international organizations will take up these recommendations into action.

1. The project outputs have brought huge improvements in the national and regional partnerships, and have both tangible and intangible impacts to poor and disadvantaged communities. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the project outcomes should not die out, but the project must be continued.

2. Sustainability seems to be the main issue in both the networks. A three dimensional model of sustainability– financial, social and institutional, backed up by contemporary technologies, could be one of the viable options. Financial sustainability envisages that networks should support operational cost from the delivery of services, social sustainability places focus on delivery of the services especially in the arena of health, education and empowerment and institutional sustainability visualizes the power of partnership to establish horizontal and vertical linkages with networks working at the grass root level. For added value additions, both the networks should target unemployed youth, self employed individuals, public sector employees, farmers, pensioners, women's groups, small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) and students in the rural communities, among others.

3. APTN should address the issues that would ensure the commitment from members and increases its focal points.

4. It is strongly recommended that ETN should strengthen its linkage with APTN to forged additional partnership, develop content and services offered to communities and for quality knowledge sharing benefiting its regional members.

5. Given the present scenario that many member countries still have not connected with APTN and ETN, it is strongly recommended that both the networks should create simplified coordinating / communication system among all levels of the network and care more among the non-English users.

6. It is strongly recommended that ESCAP in corporation with other international organizations play a facilitating role in policy dialogue with respective governments, in connecting its member countries into already established regional networking system.

7. It is recommended that exchange visits should be undertaken between APTN and ETN mainly to share ideas on functioning and providing service to the poor and disadvantaged communities.

8. It is recommended that ESCAP in corporation with ECE and other international organizations to monitor the participants' scalability of transformation of the enhanced knowledge gained in the region . A real field survey in some countries could be useful guide to identify the gaps for taking up of the next step.

9. It is strongly recommended that the next phase of the project should focus on capacity enhancement of the already established regional telecentre networks, strengthen them, and help connect the regional networks globally and promote the linkage with Pacific island developing countries.

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Annex 1: The list of personnel contacted for review processes.

Mr. Xuan Zengpei, Director, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Reduction Division (IDD)

Mr. Wu Guoxiang, Chief, Space Applications Section, IDD

Mr. Sanjay Srivastava, Regional Advisor of Disaster Risk Reduction, IDD

Mr. Ram Tiwaree, Information Technology Officer, IDD

Mr. Clovis Freire, Economic Affairs Officer, IDD

Mr. Rajindra De Silva Ariyabandu, Economic Affairs Officer, IDD

Mr. Patrick Preard, 66 bis reu Lamarck, 75018 Paris, France

Annex 2: Documents reviewed

Project Document, ESCAP

Project Implementation Plan, ESCAP

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- Regional Workshop for Knowledge-hubs in the Asia-Pacific Region, Nanjing, China, 2009.

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Annex 3 (a): Questionnaire survey for participants/ focal officers

Knowledge Networks through ICT access Points for Disadvantage Communities (KN4DC):
Regional Evaluation - Questionnaire

May 2010

Background:

The United Nations Development Account Project entitled "Knowledge networks through ICT access points for disadvantaged communities" (KN4DC) was launched in mid 2006 with the objective to empower rural and disadvantaged communities in improving the living standard through transformation of selected ICT access points/ telecentres into network of knowledge hubs and by providing, sharing and disseminating knowledge including those related to employment, education, gender and health. ESCAP in cooperation organized a number of events in the past in Asia-Pacific

The project is being evaluated by an independent consultant. As a participant of one or more meetings under the project KN4DC, we would like to request you to answer a number of questions. Your cooperation in completing the questionnaire and returning to us on or before 10 May 2010 would be much appreciated and extremely helpful for future course of action for long term continuity of the project outputs.

1. How many telecentre network/s are there in your country? How do those networks work?

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. How have you and your organization/telecentre or telecentre network benefited by attending regional meetings under the KN4DC project including parallel meetings during eAsia 2008, 2009). Please elaborate.

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. How have you exchanged the information/ knowledge gained attending those meetings with other telecentres /telecentre networks in your country?

    _____

    _____

    _____

4. Can you quantify the use of telecentres/knowledge-hubs by the rural and disadvantaged communities (particularly women) in your country?

    _____

    _____

    _____

5. How did these communities benefit from knowledge sharing? Please elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

6. What type of telecentre services are most demanded in your country? (such as, e-agriculture, e-health, e-education, e-governance, communication, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

7. What particular action have you taken to fulfill/enhance quality of such demands based on the knowledge gained from different regional meetings? Based on your experience, to what extent this project (as a result of your participation in different meetings) has impacted on the disadvantaged communities in your country? Were you able to initiate/ influence any change in the Government policy for the promotion of telecentres/telecentre networks in your country?

_____

_____

_____

8. Were you able to provide new and value added services to telecentres that would benefit rural communities due to enhanced knowledge you have gained through the project?

_____

_____

_____

9. Do your organization/telecentre/ network is a member and interact with the regional telecentre network, such as Asia Pacific Telecentre Network (APTN) or other one (Eurasia Community e-Centre)?

_____

_____

_____

10. If yes, how have you benefited by interacting with a regional telecentre network?

_____

_____

_____

11. In your opinion what are the challenges for sustainability of telecentres/knowledge hubs in your country?

_____

_____

_____

12.   What are the existing opportunities to overcome some of those challenges?

    _____

    _____

    _____

13.   Based on your knowledge, what key recommendations can you propose to improve the functioning of telecentres and/ or telecentre network/s in your country and regional telecentre network, such as APTN?

    _____

    _____

    _____

14.   Additional comments (if any).

    _____

    _____

    _____

Name of the participant/ focal officer:_____

Position:_____

Organization: _____

Annex 3 (b): Questionnaire survey for Regional evaluation

Knowledge Networks through ICT access Points for Disadvantage Communities (KN4DC):
Regional Evaluation - Questionnaire for APTN

May 2010

Background:

The United Nations Development Account Project entitled "Knowledge networks through ICT access points for disadvantaged communities" (KN4DC) was launched in mid 2006 with the objective to empower rural and disadvantaged communities in improving the living standard through transformation of selected ICT access points/ telecentres into network of knowledge hubs and by providing, sharing and disseminating knowledge including those related to employment, education, gender and health. ESCAP in cooperation organized a number of events in the past in Asia-Pacific

The project is being evaluated by an independent consultant. As a participant of one or more meetings under the project KN4DC, we would like to request you to answer a number of questions. Your cooperation in completing the questionnaire and returning to us on or before 10 May 2010 would be much appreciated and extremely helpful for future course of action for long term continuity of the project outputs.

1.   How many members (national telecentres/telecentre networks) are there in APTN?

_____

_____

_____

2.   How does your network define the criteria of network membership?

_____

_____

_____

3.   How APTN coordinate with its member activities?

_____

_____

_____

4.   Are they all active members of the network? If not, who are the active members? Do you have any criteria to differentiate between them?

_____

_____

_____

5. What role do the Network members play in empowering the poor and the disadvantaged communities with respect to enhance knowledge and value added services?

_____

_____

_____

6. Does APTN conduct meetings/ trainings regularly to its Network members? If yes, what particular knowledge they (members) received through regular participation from these meetings?

_____

_____

_____

7. What services does APTN provide or is planning to provide to its members?

_____

_____

_____

8. How does APTN identify the needs of the telecentre users?

_____

_____

_____

9. How does APTN contribute to empower disadvantaged communities, especially rural communities, and women of Asia pacific Region?

_____

_____

_____

10. How is APTN planning to sustain its activities in the long run?

_____

_____

_____

11. Please briefly mention if you have received any support

Project	Type of support	Duration
KN4DC		
Information and Communications Technology Agency (ICTA)		
Other International Organizations		

12. Do you have any link with other regional/international networks in other regions: e.g. Africa, Latin America, West Asia? Please elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

13 Additional comments (if any)

_____

_____

_____

Name of person (filling up of the questionnaire):_____

Position:_____

Organization: _____