

ICT for Development

in

**The Danish Ministry of
Foreign Affairs**

Consultation Report from DfID

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Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Foreword	2
Summary	4
ICT in Poverty Reduction	7
The Context for Change	11
Current Activity in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	13
The Challenge	18

Appendices

1. Contributors to the Consultation
2. Workshop Participants
3. Workshop Recommendations
4. Panos Comment
5. ICD and the MDGs (audiovisual)
6. The Consultant

Foreword

Brief

The consultant was commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Policy and Planning Department to review its development activity and suggest ways of mainstreaming information and communications technology (ICT) in this work.

Terms of Reference

The specific terms of reference were to:

- recommend ways of introducing and integrating ICT in relevant sector programmes in the Danida programme countries, including suggesting how ICT can support the PRSP process
- advise on how to focus and prioritise Danish financial assistance to international organisations working with ICT, prioritising key international ICT players with whom Denmark should collaborate as part of a strategic plan of action
- help to identify specific comparative advantages in the field of ICT and consequently point out how Danish areas of competence can best supplement the existing work on ICT and development conducted by the international community
- propose a way to secure synergy between Danish use of ICT in development and Danish support for research and development.

Process

The consultation had four phases:

- a visit by the consultant to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to interview headquarters staff and become familiar with relevant documentation
- a visit by the Head of the ICT section to the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to meet counterparts
- participation by the consultant in an ICT for development workshop organised by the Head of the ICT Section and held at the Ministry attended by officials and representatives of outside organisations active in the field
- report preparation.

It is intended that a further consultation should take place after six months to evaluate the implementation of these guidelines. Part of this consultation should be conducted in collaboration with key ICT experts, who at this point would have a possibility to advise on concrete actions to secure the further implementation of prioritised recommendations.

The Report

It should be emphasised that this is a working document offering practical guidelines rather than a strategy. ICT is a fast changing, wide ranging and diverse field. Who, for example, would have been able to predict the impact of mobile phones on livelihoods five years ago?

This report is intended to:

- set the ICT in development scene as a context for change
- provide a brief overview of the Ministry's current involvement in ICT, both centrally and in country
- reflect the views of those officials and representatives of outside organisations captured in the consultation.

The report is set out in these sections.

Summary – key findings and options for action

ICT in Poverty Reduction – a brief review of ICT's role

The Context for Change – major activities relating to Denmark's position in the field

Current Activity in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – headlines from the consultation

The Challenge – options for action

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all those who contributed to this consultation and made it an enjoyable and instructive exercise in collaboration, especially Ulla Hauer for her commitment and Franz-Michael Mellbin for his guidance and support.

Summary

What Is ICT'S role in Poverty Reduction?

- ICT spans broadcasting (including community radio) computing, the internet, satellite transmission, telephony, video and the more traditional communications media.
- The development priority is to create national enabling environments bringing the technology within the reach of poor people.
- There is mounting evidence of ICT's ability to help reduce poverty and systematic ways of measuring its impact on the Millennium Development Goals are being explored by, among others, the UN ICT Task Force.

The Context for Change

- Most developing countries are experiencing ICT expansion, especially in the availability of mobile phones.
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are being seen by the donor community as key drivers in broadening participation in and expression through ICT.
- At global level, the G8 Digital Opportunities Task (DOT) Force and the UN ICT Task Force have stimulated cooperation between governments, the private sector and civil society in implementing ICT for poverty reduction, while the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) will address, among others, the key themes for Denmark of communication rights, e learning and gender.
- Donor agencies are developing ICT for development policies and are increasingly collaborating through functionally specific programmes.
- ICT already features in the Ministry's work across the board, resulting from both deliberate intervention and natural demand at project and programme level.
- An ICT desk has been created in S.POL, the Policy and Planning Department of the South Group (Danida) in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- The Ministry also collaborates extensively with a range of Danish and international organisations working in the ICT field.

Options for Action

These options are identified by the consultation for consideration as effective ways of taking forward the ICT for poverty reduction agenda.

Policy and Capacity

- Formal recognition of ICT for development priorities in policy and programme instruments, including Aid Management Guidelines, Country and Sector Strategies.
- Effective and seamless knowledge management across organisational and territorial boundaries, using ICT should be reflected in the outcomes of the Ministry Task Force on Communication.
- Benchmarking and policy review of the potential offered by multilaterals and international financial institutions supported by the Ministry, based on

its own priorities emerging from the discussion following this report, to establish how best results can be gained from funding to this sector.

- Collaboration with other donors and stakeholders at national and regional level as a way of addressing large scale ICT requirements. This should reflect the emerging role of semi-independent agencies in brokering collaboration in specific areas.
- Building capacity and capability through, for example, the Danida Centre for Competence Development, supported by contributions from partner agencies.
- Support to embassies, headquarters staff and collaborating agencies via a Help Desk based, initially and in the short term, with the Head of the ICT Section.
- The Quality Assessment Unit should play an important role in ensuring the effective implementation of the Ministry's ICT agenda, developing performance indicators from priority countries and sectors, and from existing work.
- Research should contribute to this agenda by compiling existing work on ICT's role in poverty reduction, identifying gaps and commissioning new research in the area in collaboration with other donors and with the Ministry's partners and through a clear strategy to support and encourage Danish and Nordic research in the ICT area.

Priority Countries, Sectors and Comparative Advantage

- Focus is required in exploiting Denmark's comparative advantage and making best use of the Ministry's resources. Strong support emerged from the consultation for Denmark's comparative advantage in four areas: rights based media work, e learning, gender and small business development.
- Following from these priorities, Ghana appears a strong option for small business development and Nicaragua for e learning. The choice of focus countries for rights based media work is less clear though from the broad perspective of perceived need, Bangladesh and Vietnam seem likely candidates.

Awareness Raising

- Ambassadors, as the lead decision makers in country with growing responsibility for resource allocation, should be helped to understand the technology's role in poverty reduction and the factors involved in making effective decisions about its use.
- Champions for ICT in development at senior level in relevant embassies should come forward or be identified and supported to help take forward the agenda.
- Sectoral ICT in poverty reduction toolkits should be prepared and distributed to all advisers and embassies and should be publically available on line. Revision should take place at least every two years.

Resources

Innovative ways of increasing the impact of the Ministry's resources in this area could include:

- secondment to the Ministry of experts from partner organisations with the *quid pro quo* that secondees gain valuable experience of the Ministry's ways of working
- volunteer help, especially in more practical areas of implementation in country
- Sector programme unallocated funds when available.

The potential outlined in this report will, however, be difficult to achieve without the introduction of additional funds.

ICT in Poverty Reduction

What is ICT?

ICT spans broadcasting (including community radio) computing, the internet, satellite transmission, telephony, video and the more traditional communications media.

What Can It Do?

Like any form of communication, the more interactive these media are, the more effective they are in achieving attitude and behaviour change and in empowering users economically and socially. Face to face is still best.

Telephony gives immediacy, avoids literacy barriers, and enables minority language speakers to communicate with each other more widely.

Broadcasting trades off impact against numbers, though increasingly this formula is threatened where internet costs are low. Awareness of these differences is vital in planning communications for development.

How Should It Be Implemented?

The development priority is to create national enabling environments bringing the technology within the reach of poor people. As networks are being built, regulations agreed and institutions formed now, this is urgent. Because ICT can, and does, deliver these benefits the danger is that it can increase the relative poverty of people who cannot use it.

Increasingly, these media are converging technologically and organisationally. It is possible to listen to radio via the internet and send video via mobile phones. In response to this, communications companies are diversifying and merging to bring together content, hardware and transmission via antenna, cable and satellite. National governments and multinational regulators like the UN's ITU (International Telecommunications Union) are developing regulation to manage this convergence. This change, happening in developing as well as developed countries, is often politically fraught as the largely technical and managerial issues around running a telecommunications system are meshed with the politically sensitive ones around broadcasting and, often, newspapers.

The products and the regulation are interdependent. People will buy equipment and services they want and can afford to use. Cost and availability in a territory are partly determined by market forces, which shape and are shaped by regulation. Most developing countries are under pressure to privatise and deregulate their telecommunications.

If the wealth gap is not to be widened and exclusion increased a pro-poor dimension must be added to this process. Competition and market forces, though necessary in lowering prices and stimulating the supply of products and services overall, will not in themselves meet the needs of poor people. Careful intervention is needed to bring them into the market.

While the enabling environment for pro-poor ICT deployment varies between countries priorities for action to achieve this are the same:

- Using evidence of ICT's development value to encourage governments at the highest level to develop pro-poor strands in the ICT enabling environment and to accelerate the process overall
- institutional reform and capacity building to create effective, pro-poor regulation and to manage the change process
- coordination of development agency activity on these fronts at national and sub regional level
- support, where appropriate for the inclusion of ICT related elements in PRSPs
- investment, and support for public/private partnership, in applications and services whose business models are designed to deliver MDG related targets sustainable in poor and remote areas
- informed appraisal of the pro-poor value of ICT elements in country programmes and projects
- awareness raising of ICT's pro-poor potential and ways of implementing it

ICT and Poverty Reduction

The technology's role in poverty reduction is still emerging. Anecdotal evidence is mounting of ways in which poor people, once they have access, are using the technology for income generation and empowerment. Intermediary agencies and developing country governments are using it to extend service delivery, improve efficiency and transparency, and to manage resources more strategically, all to the benefit of poor people.

More systematic evidence is being sought. The UN ICT Task Force is reviewing ways in which ICT can help deliver the MDGs. Several agencies, including DFID, are carrying out research into its effectiveness on the ground. Some idea of ICT's range and versatility in addressing poverty is summarised below.

How ICT can assist in reaching the MDGs

Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

- Telephony and the internet stimulate micro e-commerce.
- Trading transaction costs are reduced.
- Better market information creates more efficient price structures
- ICT enables local participation in global trade.
- In stimulating a knowledge economy it reduces dependence on physical and capital resources.
- It helps tap the value in local and traditional knowledge.
- It can help remove geographical and social barriers to wealth creation.
- ICT infrastructure attracts investment, creating employment.
- Use of the technology raises valuable skill levels.
- It increases prosperity through improved natural resource management.

Achieve Universal Primary Education

- ICT gives wider access to quality learning resources.

- It improves the quality of direct learning, especially for low and high achievers.
- It extends scarce teaching resources.
- It improves the efficiency of education management.
- Widespread ICT access lowers imbalances between local standards in, for example, rural/urban and rich/poor areas.
- It can increase the quality and numbers of teachers trained.
- The media and the internet can raise overall awareness and expectations of education.
- They increase the speed of new skill adoption.
- They extend access to learning by increasing the flexibility of learning provision.

Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

- The internet, community radio and mobile telephony empower women by giving them a stronger, wider voice and access to global knowledge.
- They can cut across traditional communication and power structures in education and society.
- ICT improves access to learning at all levels for women by offering it outside school and school hours.
- The media and ICT networks can be used to promote positive gender images and strategies to women, men, educators and policy makers.
- They accelerate change towards a more gender-sensitive knowledge base and teaching methods.
- ICT based provision facilitates women's access to teacher training.
- The media and the internet expose decision makers to the global discourse on gender equality.
- They facilitate and improve the effectiveness of gender awareness advocacy.
- They enable low cost, local gender sensitive content creation.

Reduce Child Mortality

- Low cost e-mail and telephony improve the quality of perinatal health care by giving immediate access to specialist support in poor and remote areas.
- The media and other ICT give prospective parents and health care workers more and better information about the causes of infant mortality and ways of preventing it.
- They help to challenge life-threatening beliefs and practices.
- They help to improve services by raising awareness of issues and solutions among decision makers.
- The technology can improve the quality and increase the volume of pre/in service health care training.
- It can increase the efficiency of medical supplies distribution.
- ICT influences national, regional and global activity in this area by sharing better data faster on the causes and distribution of infant mortality.
- It facilitates the transmission of preventive knowledge into the education system and public discourse.

It enables mothers and civil society groups to create participatory self help networks.

Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

- ICT improves health knowledge flow to and through the primary health care system.
- The media and the internet raise target groups' awareness of health issues and services.
- They help in recruiting, training and supporting health care workers and volunteers to extend the services' reach.
- ICT can increase the efficiency of data collection and distribution, improving service delivery.
- It can help manage more effectively the procurement and distribution of medicines.
- The media linked with the internet challenge adverse beliefs and practices in this area.
- ICT links local and national service providers and health care promoters with the global discourse and gives them access to international resources.
- It enables practitioners to influence the media agenda.
- The media and other ICT often have greater appeal to target groups than traditional instruments of behaviour change.

Ensure Environmental Sustainability

- Satellite-based Geographical Information Systems (GIS) improve resource management by governments, agencies and businesses through better access to data and communication between planners, field staff and the community.
- Portable computing and mobile telephony increase the effectiveness of environmental management in the field.
- The media spread awareness of issues and good practice.
- The media and the internet improve advocacy through national and international forums.
- ICT makes it easier to identify and track environmental abuse.
- The technology can help manage supply by identifying alternative resources and improving supply chain efficiency.
- The international media help raise public awareness supporting advocacy and improving consumer behaviour in importing countries.
- ICT facilitates knowledge exchange and international benchmarking among policy makers and practitioners.
- ICT based scientific research identifies future priorities and solutions.

The Context for Change

Local

Most developing countries are experiencing ICT expansion, especially in the availability of mobile phones. Pressure from the WTO and from industry to liberalise and privatise the telecommunications sector is accelerating this process in some countries more than in others.

Because they require wide scale public consultation on priorities, only possible through the media and newer ICT, PRSPs are being seen by the donor community as key drivers in broadening participation in and expression through ICT. This view is based on the requirement for public participation in the strategy process and the consequent need to develop widely and openly accessible means of achieving it. A recent OECD survey showed that only four out of 26 countries had included ICT in their PRSPs. It has been suggested that one reason for this is the belief that its inclusion will not find favour with donors: a vicious circle.

ICT is now, by contrast, beginning to be included in national development strategies. A growing number of developing countries are preparing national ICT strategies, often encouraged by the World Bank and the UNDP, for whom this is a priority. These are of varying value, limited scope and feasibility but may be used as a base on which to build.

Global

The G8's *Digital Opportunities Task (DOT) Force*, reporting in 2002, paved the way for concerted, collaborative action by leading donor governments, the private sector and civil society in ICT for development. Among its initiatives which have found continuing tripartite support are:

- ENABLIS – a system of support for ICT's use in local business, initially launched in Africa
- Louder Voices – a way of building developing countries' competence for effective participation in international decision making forums. Initially a report, the project is now being considered by DfID for programme funding
- The Open Knowledge Network – an attempt to create a global technological and regulatory environment for the creation and exchange of local knowledge.

The *UN ICT Task Force* has taken over coordination of some DOT Force initiatives and has a mandate to consider ICT's role in the work of UN agencies. Also tripartite in composition, it contributes to the World Summit on the Information Society

The *UN World Summit on the Information Society* is set to deliver a Declaration and Action Plan covering a wide policy agenda including regulation and the technology's role in development. Due to convene initially

in December in Geneva and in Tunis in November 2005, it is exposing tensions over ends and means but is likely to have some effect on governments' perceptions of the field. Themes include communications rights, e learning and gender: all identified as priorities for Denmark

Development Community Response

Most development agencies, especially donors, are developing positions on ICT for development. These vary in scope and focus, and are summarised in an OECD review.

An important feature of this process is increasing collaboration between donors, often with partners from other sectors, through functionally specific programmes at country and regional level, for example:

- Building Digital Opportunities (BDO) – a partnership to tackle regulatory, capacity building and advocacy needs, mainly in Africa and Asia (DfID, DGIS, SDC)
- Catalysing Access to ICT in Africa (CATIA) – a programme with similar objectives but also including infrastructure development (CIDA, DfID)

Such collaborations are beginning to serve as a model for (relatively) low risk, high impact sustainable intervention with the added advantage of rapid learning for a modest investment by new or smaller players in the field.

Current Activity in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ICT already features in the Ministry's work across the board, resulting from both deliberate intervention and natural demand at project and programme level. Some indication of the range of this activity is given in the brief headlines below from a series of meetings with geographical and sectoral advisers. Their brevity does not do justice to the interest, insight and awareness they showed.

Policy and Planning Department

An *ICT Section* has been created in S.POL, the Policy and Planning Department of the South Group (Danida) in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Section Head works with other departments, embassies, partner organisations, multilaterals and international institutions to develop policy and activity in this field, and to ensure that the Danish view is expressed in international forums. She is currently the Danish focal point for the World Summit on the Information Society.

Regional Desks and Technical Support

The *Private Sector Programme* manages from the centre a series of initiatives suitable for stimulating ICT's use in business development. The Private Sector Development Programme links Danish companies with those in developing countries, including a Business to Business initiative in South Africa. Mixed Credits converts commercial loans into soft ones. Political risks are covered by Investment Guarantee Facilities. The Industrialisation Fund for Developing Countries provides capital. In the belief that ICT benefits business, attempts are being made to measure outcomes including employment. The Programme also collaborates with the private sector, including for instance the ICT company Metrocomia (see below).

Opportunities – Continued and focused Danish support of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the ICT sector through the PRSP-programme. A catalogue of Danish recommendations and experiences in this field could be developed. Several international organisations have already expressed interest in collaborating with Denmark on the ICT and SME theme. A special consultancy should be undertaken in order to specify how best to set up collaboration between the ICT desk and PRSP-Programme in order to utilize the Danish experience with creative entrepreneurship.

S.ASEAN runs programmes in Vietnam in the agriculture, fisheries and water sectors. It has ICT advisers based there long term helping to set up ICT-based information systems in the Ministry of Fisheries. The technology is being introduced as a tool in coastal and environmental management. Fisheries programmes associated with the Mekong River Commission are using satellite-based global information systems (GIS) including a fisheries database.

Opportunities – exploring synergies with other ICT for development programmes in Vietnam. Furthermore, concrete actions should be taken in

order to inform the programmes in the respective countries about the work undertaken by S.POL on ICT. A business sector programme presently starting up in Vietnam would be relevant for inclusion of an ICT component. Collaboration with the UNDP ICT programme in Vietnam should be investigated.

S.ASIA has started to look at how to use ICT for education in Nepal, though support for this sector is also beginning in Afghanistan and Bhutan. The potential for ICT-based distance education is recognised, especially for teacher training and the availability of learning materials in minority languages. There is support for an internet linked study centre in Kathmandu. The PERI-project, conducted by INASP, is currently being rolled out in Nepal with economic support from Denmark. Danish support has also been giving to the National Library of Bhutan from the ENRECA (Enhancement of Research Capacity) programme. The Bhutan engagement includes computerisation of Bhutan's national written language and digital preservation and cataloguing of national documents. S. ASIA is also supporting an agriculture programme in Bangladesh including the design of an information system for the Ministry of Agriculture.

Opportunities - Distance learning expertise is available from several Danish universities, for example, the Professor of Virtual Learning Lone Dirckink-Holmfeld, Danish member of the InfoDEV Board. Collaboration with the existing Danish network of e-learning professionals could be established. The large number of small radio stations in Nepal could form the basis of an ICT intervention in Nepal. Documentation of the Bhutanese collaboration, including the contribution from the Royal Danish Library, should be made for further reference.

S.EWAFs partner countries (with intensified programmes) are Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, and Benin. They have decided to include access to ICT in the forthcoming Ghana Business Sector Program Support. Various activities have been considered, i.e. establishing incubator centres in the regions, but in order to examine in more detail the potential of ICT vis-à-vis the Ghanaian business environment it has been decided initially to undertake a baseline study as part of the Programme. On the basis of the study a catalogue of possible areas of Danida support will be developed.

Opportunities

- strengthening the Ghana business support intervention
- encouraging ICT-based ex patriot support networks (for example, the African and Indian Diaspora networks linking expatriates in northern countries with individuals and communities at home for investment and mentoring)
- incorporating ICT into education and health programmes
- collaboration with the DfID/CIDA funded CATIA initiative developing ICT infrastructure and capacity across Africa

- collaboration with the DfID funded Imfundo initiative on ICT for teacher training in some African countries.

S.MELA is supporting the use of ICT for local content and knowledge sharing in agriculture programmes, and for infrastructure mapping in environmental programmes in Bolivia and Nicaragua.

Opportunities

- the sector programme on multilingualism for indigenous people in Bolivia
- the new education sector programme in Nicaragua
- communication between isolated communities on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua
- empowerment, gender and minority languages, in eventual collaboration with IICD

S.SOAF's priority countries and sectors are Mozambique (agriculture, education, energy), South Africa (health), Tanzania (agriculture) and Zambia (health, legal, roads). HIV/AIDS is a priority for all these countries.

Opportunities

- developing ICT in the fight against HIV/AIDS
- collaboration with the DfID/CIDA funded CATIA initiative developing ICT infrastructure and capacity across Africa
- collaboration with the DfID funded Imfundo initiative on ICT for teacher training in some African countries.

S. FIN is working with the World Bank on an ICT strategy with private sector investment. None of the Danish Trust Funds at the World Bank is currently spent on ICT.

Opportunities

Using the Danish Trust Fund for ICT projects. A strategy for this should be developed. The World Bank should be approached and a visit by the ICT desk in collaboration with *S.FIN* should be carried out.

S.UNP: ICT is one of the UNDP's six priority areas. It emphasises the development of national ICT strategies, though *S.UNP* is considering its comparative advantage in this field.

Opportunities

A clarification of eventual synergies between the work done by the *S.UNP* desk and the ICT desk could be undertaken.

Collaboration

The Ministry already collaborates with a range of Danish and international organisations working in the ICT field. Those below are indicative.

Aalborg University is using Danish Trust Fund money for e learning. Together with other Danish Universities courses in ICT and e-learning are offered to Danish students from the university.

The Baltic Media Centre works with governments in Europe and South East Asia on media policy, journalist training (including gender awareness) and conflict resolution, including coproduction across enemy barriers.

Bellanet is a multi-donor funded initiative (the Ministry was a founder member), which promotes and facilitates effective collaboration within the international development community. Bellanet takes a holistic approach that puts people first in the pursuit of meaningful uses of ICTs for collaboration and development. Rather than providing technological solutions alone, Bellanet promotes collaborative approaches to solving development problems, especially with the help of ICTs. Over the past several years, Bellanet has placed increasing emphasis on developing capacity and building strategic partnerships with organisations based in the South so that they can provide Bellanet-like support to others in their respective regions.

BRIDGE is another portal based at the Institute for Development Studies at University of Sussex, specialising in ICT and Gender. Denmark has been a core funder for years, but is now considering withdrawing the support.

Opportunities - If Denmark wishes to integrate gender in the number of ICT focus areas; BRIDGE would be a valuable tool. Gender is one of the cross cutting themes in Danish development aid assistance.

The Danish School of Journalism runs courses for developing country journalists and programme makers

ELDIS is an on line development information gateway, based at the Institute for Development Studies at University of Sussex. Danida has funded ELDIS for many years but is now considering continued support.

Opportunities – a possibility was to ask ELDIS to produce a special website on a subject prioritised by Danida, for example ICT and Human Rights. SIDA hopes Denmark will continue to support ELDIS as ELDIS substitutes an alternative to Development Gateway, the Internet Portal funded by the World Bank.)

IMS is an emergency mechanism acting to solve media issues in conflict and immediate post-conflict areas. Partly funded by the Ministry and faith groups, they work in collaboration to provide catalytic efforts in the field, for example press freedom monitors in Somalia.

InfoDEV is a multi donor funded grants programme for ICT in development projects managed by the World Bank. Denmark has been a core funder for several years.

Opportunities – given the fund's refocusing on larger flagship projects the Ministry should revisit the extent to which these projects reflect the priorities decided in response to this report.

Metrocomia is a Danish-based company, originally supported by the Ministry in order to stimulate the introduction of ICT in SMEs in developing countries. It is focused on helping to fund infrastructure, job creation for ICT graduates, building capacity for exports, strengthening ICT use in society and influencing attitudes towards ICT and entrepreneurship. The co-funder of Metrocomia has been a consultant to the Head of the ICT Section in international business related policy work.

OneWorld International – a UK-based NGO running a series of on line knowledge for development and capacity building activities, including the Open Knowledge Network, an initiative to facilitate the creation and exchange of local knowledge via ICT.

Opportunities – the Ministry is in discussion with them about participation in this venture in appropriate locations.

Panos – a UK-based NGO active in communication rights advocacy and capacity building with which the Ministry already collaborates (see Appendix 4)

Opportunities – using Panos's experience and network in developing countries to amplify Denmark's existing work in this field.

PERI supports ICT based information production and dissemination for developing country research as part of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP).

ZEBRA is a Danish network of media professionals working with development.

The Challenge

Policy

Like most donors, the Ministry faces the question of how to integrate ICT into *central and country policy*. Response to this question is framed by several factors:

- the time needed to implement change through the various policy instruments available to the Ministry
- decentralisation of central advisory support
- internal communications reorganisation.

Overall policy direction flows from *Partnership 2000* in which ICT is only briefly mentioned: 'The involvement and building of ICT capacity should be regarded as a means for increasing the effectiveness of development work, and not as an end in itself. As in other contexts, such activities should be planned and implemented on the basis of needs and challenges identified by Denmark's partners in development co-operation.' (see: http://www.um.dk/publikationer/fremmedsprog/english/analysis/11_4.asp).

The document is not time bound.

Government priorities for the next five years have recently been determined. The key central policy and administrative instrument is the recently published (July 2003) *Aid Management Guidelines*, where ICT is not included in the key implementation principles. So far, ICT is only mentioned as a means of supporting communication: '*Communication must contribute to the sharing of knowledge; exchanges of lessons learned and exploit ICT as an integral part of development assistance*', see: <http://www.um.dk/danida/amg/>

The *Sector Guidelines* frame policy at the next level down, followed by the *Sector Programme Support Guidelines*, which are determined by steps in the programme cycle.

The nature of ICT can make its introduction into policy and programmes problematic. Not generally treated as a sector in itself, the technology can be accommodated as a delivery tool within existing guidelines. It should be emphasised, however, that this approach, however, leaves implementation to the discretion of the individual manager and does not, in any case, allow for the specialist resources needed to ensure that ICT is accessible by poor people. The effective deployment of ICT at programme and project level calls for specialist capabilities not yet readily available to most managers. This can be a further barrier to its implementation. ICT's introduction is sometimes opposed on the grounds that its value remains unproven but it cannot be proven unless introduced.

It is not, then, likely that an area so specialised and potentially resource hungry as ICT will be written wholesale into policy until a clearer sense has

emerged in central and embassy cultures of its benefits for development and the means of realising them. It should be stressed that, unless it is formally recognised in policy and programme instruments its adoption will be piecemeal. Ways of resolving this dilemma are considered in the final section of the report.

Knowledge management is now recognised internationally as a key component of development. To the extent that knowledge is a vital economic and social resource, the argument goes, development agencies should be fully capable in managing its effective creation and exchange for the benefit of poor people. Growing awareness of the potential value of local and traditional knowledge is favouring knowledge management models which favour two way (often south/south) knowledge exchange, made easier by ICT, rather than centralised, hierarchical ones. The Open Knowledge Network, a DOT Force initiative led by OneWorld International and supported by DfID, is one attempt to put this into practice. The network topology of telephony and the internet, to the extent that it is accessible to poor people, enable this model to be implemented.

Effective internal knowledge management is becoming even more important as the Ministry decentralises its development work. As the technology permeates both development agencies and their constituencies it will become increasingly necessary to manage knowledge seamlessly across organisational and territorial boundaries, using ICT.

It is understood that a Ministry Task Force on Communication is currently reporting. Although the remit of this consultancy has not specifically included this area, it is suggested that the changes outlined above should be taken into account in considering the policy and resource implications of the Task Force findings.

If it is too late for including ICT in the ongoing work of the Task Force on Communication, an appendix could be added. For this purpose an external consultant in collaboration with the ICT desk should identify how ICT and knowledge management could mutually benefit. Contact with a knowledge management expert from DfID could prove useful, as DfID is undergoing a similar exercise.

Half Denmark's ODA is spent on *multilaterals*. The Ministry also contributes to and works with *international institutions, special funds and the European Union*. As suggested above, a number of UN agencies are becoming substantially involved in ICT for development. The Ministry is already engaging in policy consultation on the UNDP's role in ICT implementation. This process should be extended to all the multilaterals supported by the Ministry, using benchmarks derived from its own priorities emerging from the discussion following this report, to establish how best results can be gained from funding to this sector. Wherever appropriate, these organisations' central and local capacity and capability should be used to extend and support Danish ICT effort.

The UNDP, in particular, has a network of national ICT specialists whose experience should be tapped in making and implementing local plans. Embassies in partner countries should be aware of local ICT intervention by multilaterals, international institutions, and other donors to help them decide whether and where to become involved.

Collaboration is increasing between donors and other stakeholders at national and regional level as a ways of addressing large scale ICT. It should, however, be borne in mind that collaboration has a price: the benefits of extending Denmark's reach could be offset by the costs of managing the process. Informal opportunities for sharing knowledge with other donors on opportunities for collaboration through, for example, the European Union ICT Experts Group and OECD meetings should be utilised.

The decision on which collaborations, if any, to pursue should be based on prior decisions about country and sector priorities based on the criteria outlined below.

The emerging role of semi-independent agencies like the Netherlands-based International Institute for Development (IICD) and the Sweden-based International Organisation for Knowledge Economy and Enterprise Development (IKED) in brokering and managing partnerships should be explored. IKED could play a particular role in promoting Nordic collaboration in areas of mutual interest, for example, gender.

Capacity and Capability

The *Danida Centre for Competence Development* is a key resource in developing capacity among advisers and in embassies. Opportunities should be explored for integrating ICT elements into existing training and for developing an ICT strand to the Centre's work. This could be supported by contributions from partner agencies.

A *Help Desk* could be based, initially and in the short term, with the Head of the ICT Section. This would, however, require consultancy support to be effective. Promoted to embassies and sectoral advisers, the service should put them in touch with specialist help in country, in Denmark and internationally. The information for this service should be integrated with the Ministry's knowledge management function.

Further training should be provided for the Head of Section, including first hand experience of other development agencies' approach to this field.

The Quality Assessment Unit could play an important role in ensuring the effective implementation of the Ministry's ICT agenda. Using experience from the priority countries and sectors, and from existing work, performance indicators could be developed and reflected in department heads' contracts to ensure that, at least, there is engagement with the ICT agenda in embassies.

Research can contribute to this agenda by compiling existing work on ICT's role in poverty reduction, identifying gaps and commissioning new research in the area. This could be undertaken in close collaboration with other donors and with the Ministry's partners. However, a clear strategy should be developed in order to support and encourage Danish research done in the ICT area. Eventually the Nordic countries could each select and identify special areas of competence in which to concentrate to excel.

The research facility could also benefit from the improved access to research subjects and data offered by ICT. Ways of optimising this both within the Ministry and across the fast expanding global research networks in this field could be explored. Dissemination would be an important consideration in both activities.

Options

Priority Countries and Sectors

While it should be clear from this report that ICT is increasingly permeating and has a growing value in all development activity, it is equally clear that focus is required in exploiting Denmark's comparative advantage and making best use of the Ministry's resource limitations. Decisions about which sectors should be given priority in which countries will only result from an iterative process of in-country support and central encouragement.

As a first step in the process, however, it should be noted that strong support emerged from the consultation for four areas: rights based media work; e-learning, gender and small business development. Areas in which Denmark has grown over the years strong competence and international regard, these offer a starting point for consolidating its position on ICT for development. The first of these: rights based media work is perhaps the one in which the Ministry, working with agencies like the Baltic Media Centre and the Danish School of Journalism has the strongest comparative advantage.

Following from these priorities, Ghana appears a strong option for small business development and Nicaragua for e learning. The choice of focus countries for rights based media work is less clear though from the broad perspective of perceived need, Bangladesh and Vietnam seem likely candidates.

Country strategies

Effective ICT implementation will increasingly only occur through inclusion in these strategies. As they operate on a five year cycle, this could present a serious barrier to progress. It is, however, unrealistic to expect ICT's wide scale, uncritical inclusion. In preparing the strategies, then, evidence should

be sought of both the need for ICT activity and the means of meeting it, especially in priority sectors. This could be done in consultation with local agencies and partners competent in this field and using the guidelines mentioned below. Any such evidence should be borne in mind when allocating resources. As experience mounts from priority countries and sectors this should be made available to all embassies and should be factored into strategy formation.

Full account should be taken, in countries where they are relevant, of opportunities offered by the PRSP process and national development strategies, including those focused on ICT. This could form part of the exploratory process with chosen focus countries, perhaps as part of an overall communication needs review. Again, DfID is pursuing a similar approach.

Sector Guidelines/Review

In a similar way, ICT components could be developed for Sector Guidelines and emerging good practice from priority countries could be reflected in the annual sector reviews for each country, starting with priority countries as a model.

Aid Management Guidelines

As ICT use grows in developing countries, donor country embassies and offices are increasingly being called upon to make decisions about support, often without access to specialist advice. Further, more active promotion of ICT for development through Danish embassies can, in the longer term, only be expected to take place if it is included in these Guidelines. Broad indicators of priority and good practice should be included at the next opportunity in the Guidelines and subsequently refined as the work extends and as evidence of good practice begins to flow in from priority countries and sectors.

Awareness and Capacity Building

Awareness of ICT's role in poverty reduction and of effective ways in which it can be implemented is a necessary condition for successful policy and practice. The design and implementation of technology policy in both public and private sectors has suffered because the most senior policy makers are often those least aware of both its potential and its pitfalls. As a result, decisions about an area of increasing strategic importance and, often, high cost, are either delegated to juniors or side lined.

Attempts are now growing to ensure that senior decision makers in the development community are equipped to engage with this area. The UN ICT Task Force, for example, has run familiarisation sessions for UN ambassadors in New York. Danish ambassadors, as the lead decision makers in country with growing responsibility for resource allocation, could be helped to understand the technology's role in poverty reduction and the factors involved in making effective decisions about its use.

This process could include spoken and written briefings on local and global priorities, accessible information on Danish and local sources of expertise and, where appropriate, hands-on experience including project visits. It is understood that embassy visits will be made to brief on the Aid Management Guidelines. These would offer a good opportunity to explain the ICT agenda. A great deal of diplomatic attention is now being focused on the topic through preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Opportunity should be taken to familiarise both country and UN ambassadors with the field as a whole and Denmark's position in particular.

Champions

Experience suggests that ICT is often most successfully within an organisation, and by it to achieve its core purpose, when championed by a senior individual. Usually that individual has an enthusiasm for the technology's use and/or a vision of how it may best be applied. Such individuals tend to be self-selecting but, when they emerge, can be helped to become more effective by being given knowledge, support and decision-making scope.

The opportunity could be made for champions to come forward themselves or be identified by the Ministry among ambassadors and senior embassy staff. Special provision should then be made for their support in developing effective ICT interventions. The emergence of these champions will, to an extent, determine priority countries.

Sectoral toolkits

These should be prepared initially for priority and then for all sectors. Compiled by both internal and external sector specialists, they should draw on international good practice to highlight key factors in designing and implementing ICT policy and programmes for the sector. Developed as a participatory exercise through circulation of drafts for comment, they should

be distributed to all advisers and embassies, and should be publically available on line. Revision should take place at least every two years.

Denmark's Comparative Advantages

An attempt has being made through this consultation to identify Denmark's main areas of comparative advantage. Contributions strongly suggest that these lie in the areas of rights-based media work (including the new media), e learning and gender. These are all fields in which the Ministry has acquired over time a substantial international reputation. They are also delivered in collaboration: the first with agencies such as the Danish School of Journalism and the Baltic Media Centre, the second with a number of universities and the third with other Nordic donors.

These three areas should lie at the core of country and sector focused priority actions resulting from discussion of this report. For each priority country a review should be undertaken of the needs in these areas, existing inputs from other agencies, resulting in the identification of specific activities where Denmark could add value.

As conditions change, it is suggested that a continuing review should be conducted of Denmark's relative strengths. To a degree, these will emerge at country and global level from collaboration, but more structured attempts could be made, for example, to benchmark donor strategies through the OECD DAC review of members' ICT involvement and, possibly, through the EU's proposed attempt to capture member countries' work in this area.

Resources

Given the Ministry's current tight constraints, and the fact that only one person on its headquarters staff has ICT for development responsibility, innovative ways will have to be sought of supporting further work in this area. These could include:

- secondment to the Ministry of experts from partner organisations with the *quid pro quo* that secondees gain valuable experience of the Ministry's ways of working
- volunteer help, especially in more practical areas of implementation in country, could be enlisted as Canada has shown through its Net Corps programme
- Sector programme unallocated funds are, it is understood, sometimes available and could be diverted into this area.

In addition, as the World Summit process raises awareness of ICT for development issues in both donor and recipient countries, its profile with both groups of government is likely to rise, with the certain demand for, and possible increased supply of resources to address it.

Although these options are proposed as cost effective ways of extending the reach and impact of Denmark's work in ICT for poverty reduction, it will be difficult to realise the potential outlined in this report without the introduction of additional funds.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

ICT workshop in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Friday June 27, 2003

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Appendix 3

Recommendations from the three workshop groups

Recommendations, Group 1

ICT and Poverty Reduction

- Danida needs gender inclusion throughout the ICT development process in order to help eradicate poverty faster
- Danida should take a rights based point of departure in her ICT strategy
- It is important to ensure poor people access to technology – they will themselves find relevant uses.
- Danida should use ICT for educational development and training.
- Danida should note that the simplest technology is not always the appropriate technology
- Danida should induce more private/public partnerships in our programme countries.
- Private sector involvement is needed in order to assist technology leaps for the poor.

Recommendations, Group 2

The local context

Danida should

- Focus on knowledge (People! Not only systems/technologies)
- Space station approach! Holistic planning, framework strategy.
- Engage local players, ensure demand driven projects.
- Identify and network local knowledge hubs with local players and various donors to ensure coordination.
- Link global and local knowledge systems as well as national knowledge between donors.
- Utilize wide range of media technology for the players.

Recommendations, Group 3.

Donor Response to the Global Context

- Gather list of do's and don't's
- Media should be an integrated part of ICT strategies
- Select 4 programme countries and apply core Danish competencies to a number of sector programmes
- At the global level ICT strategies must be developed in unison with UN, WTO, and other multilateral organisations.
- At the local level it is vital to collaborate with civil society
- More focus on demand (more pull-less push)

- Multi donor approaches could be based on functional networks, including i.e. ICT standards
- Need for local capacity building
- ICT should be applied in the cross cutting themes, like gender, environment, democracy, HIV/Aids, etc.

Appendix 4

Panos Contribution

Some strategic issues relevant to Danida on ICTs.

Danida has a major international reputation for its early, sustained and pioneering support for media and communications activities in the field of development.

Several of the leading and most successful international organisations working in this field, including the Panos Institute, simply would not exist without this support which dates back to at least the mid 1980s. The support of Danida and other Nordic organisations is, for many involved in this field, some of the most innovative and important development work to have taken place related to this field.

Only relatively recently have other larger development organisations recognised the central importance of and developed strategies to address the importance of information, knowledge and communications in development, including the critical role of an independent, plural media in contributing to good governance and informed democratic societies. Danida has a long record of supporting such activities and in recognising and supporting activities that contribute to raising public understanding of development and environment issues both North and South.

Danida has, from the perspective of many organisations that have worked on these issues for many years, a reputation and a heritage, which is immensely respected. Support has ranged from both critical and impactful funding of international organisations based traditionally based in London such as Panos and Television Trust for the Environment, through to many regional and national initiatives, such as Nordic – SADC Journalism Centre and Media Institute of Southern Africa, to take just two examples.

Information and communications – traditional support adapted to a new environment?

The rationale for the support by Danida of communication and media activities for so long maintain today, but they have been reinforced by a whole set of new arguments.

The traditional arguments for supporting media and communications have tended to focus on the importance of media and communications in making governments accountable, supporting good governance, creating informed citizenry without which effective and functioning democracies – particularly new and fragile ones – are unlikely to prosper, creating public awareness of critical development issues (environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS etc) and providing channels so that people, particularly those most often marginalized from public debate, can gain a voice in society. Substantial progress has been made in all these areas.

All of these arguments, which have been made for many years, continue to have a real and arguably increasing relevance. However, the last five years have seen the

emergence of important new trends and realities, which give these issues added legitimacy and priority. These arguments are highlighted and reproduced in more detail below in an extract from a wider paper produced by Panos. They are essentially four:

New technologies: The potential of new ICTs is leading to a substantial new interest in role of communication in development. The potential for ICTs to inform, empower and create new knowledge and citizen networks has been well documented, not least by DfID in its *Think! Strategy* document on the issue. The potential of new technologies is particularly powerful when allied with the rapid developments, and massive reach of old technologies, particularly radio.

The media revolution: The media internationally, but particularly within developing countries, has undergone a revolution within recent years. It is a revolution characterised by an increasing dynamic, democratic, commercial media, which, particularly through the explosion of radio stations in many countries, providing new opportunities for public debate and engagement. It is also one where the gaps between rural and urban and rich and poor are becoming increasingly acute.

The importance of ownership: The setting of the Millennium Development Goals, and the principal methodologies, which are designed to achieve those goals (PRSPs, NEPAD etc) place a major emphasis on countries owning their development strategies. Such ownership requires strong levels of public participation, public debate and public understanding in the strategies developed. Current trends (such as the growth of radio) suggest that the potential of the media to generate such debate is immense, but the reality has been in most cases extremely limited public debate through the media of these issues.

Globalisation: Global issues of global trade, intellectual property rights, debt, genetically modified organisms and others tend to be complex, sometimes highly technical and those with most to win or lose from the outcomes of these debates – the poorest in developing countries – often have least opportunity to contribute to them. Poor people face the greatest challenge in gaining information and understanding of these issues, and least capacity to feed their perspectives into them. While there are realities to face in terms of the extent to which such challenges can be overcome, communications – the capacity of people to access and contribute information – provides a central pillar for addressing such global gaps.

September 11 and the war on terrorism: Many words have been written on the implications of September 11 and its aftermath, particularly the Afghan and Iraqi wars. At a time when arguably communication and the free of exchange of information between and among people has never been more important, arguably communication, and the media, technology and other tools that enable it, that creates understanding between and among people is degrading, not increasing.

Danida has a long and distinguished role in supporting communication and information activities. Never have such activities been more important, and support required for them been more urgent, than they are now. The policy review on these issues is therefore extremely timely.

DfID has rapidly developed an international reputation for its thinking and support for ICT activities. This reputation has been built not least on its determination to subject arguments and claims of the potential benefits of ICTs to rigorous scrutiny and analysis, its determination to root its strategy according to the information needs of the poor, to focus as much on providing a voice to people and providing information to them, and consequently to develop a multiple strategy drawing on all forms of communication technologies, both old and new. Both its policy documents and its major funding initiatives, such as CATIA, reflect both these principles and a determination to work in concert with others, building alliances both among donors and among leading NGO practitioners.

Some extracts from other Panos documents/papers issue

Changing media and communications environments

The emergence of an increasingly vigorous, independent and democratic media in most developing countries over the last decade has arguably been the most important single element in shoring up democracy and encouraging more accountable governance. Working with and supporting Southern media organisations to focus on poverty related issues is becoming more necessary and, in terms of stimulating public and policy debate on issues affecting the poor, more urgent.

The international media and communications environment is becoming both more competitive and more crowded, some of the most rapid changes are occurring in the South, and many of these changes are resulting in a declining coverage of issues concerning the poor. Four key trends, some of them contradictory, have emerged over the last decade:

- A major liberalisation and opening up of the media in most developing countries, transforming both print and broadcast media from a largely government owned, monopolistic and uncreative media environment to a more dynamic, popular, democratic, creative and complex one. The print media have, despite their sometimes limited readership, played a critical role in providing increased internal scrutiny of governments, and a free press has become increasingly regarded as a precondition for effective and sustainable development and good governance. The broadcast media have also been transformed, with competition ushering in a new environment of choice and creativity in programming, with new private radio stations rapidly establishing audience dominance over old state run broadcasting systems. Private radio stations, while often criticised for relying heavily on formulaic, music based programming, have also been praised for the opportunities they are providing for on-air discussions and for creating important new spaces for genuinely public debate and critical public commentaries on issues of national concern. This new environment has also created opportunities for the more rapid emergence of a community-based media.
- Conversely, liberalisation has often led to the emergence of an increasingly consumer led, business oriented, advertising driven and urban centred media, a media which is arguably less and less interested in the concerns of the poor, and in the case of broadcast media, decreasingly interested in providing news and information to its audiences. State run broadcasting systems have found it difficult to transform themselves into public broadcasting entities and are generally in decline, with a concomitant decline in language programming and the lack of strong and relevant programming of most concern to rural people. In the case of print media, journalists are finding it increasingly difficult to secure editorial space and resources to report on issues of most concern to the poor, and particularly to travel to rural areas, and there are in many cases fewer and fewer journalists who are interested in doing so. This is arguably leading to an increasing “invisibility” of the poor, and poverty related issues, in public and political debate. The print media in many countries are also becoming increasingly “localised” and national in their outlook and developing country editors are reporting less and less interest in international stories, particularly stories from other parts of the developing world.

- Globalisation of the media is resulting in an increasing concentration of ownership of media and communications organisations internationally, with increasing numbers of mainstream developing country media institutions being bought by large trans-national conglomerates. For most Southern based media, reliance on Northern based news sources for international news has grown rather than diminished and, with the exception of internet based news services, the number of independent southern-based news and information sources has decreased. Independent, southern oriented news sources are under increasing pressure from much larger, northern oriented and owned features services. Gaining media attention and coverage for complex, technical or poverty related issues is increasingly challenging.
- New technologies, principally in the form of the internet as well as mobile telecommunications, are creating major new opportunities for disseminating information, networking, amplifying marginalised voices and for creating synergies between new and old media. They are creating much more information based, increasingly horizontally networked and highly complex communications environments. They are leading to increasing information saturation for those who are connected, but also potentially major new forms of information (and therefore political and economic) exclusion for those who are not.

Globalisation and the challenge of global inclusion

Panos has been working with media and civil society organisations in the South for almost 15 years to build their capacities to inform people about and involve them in debates that affect them. Panos has argued since its foundation that decisions that affect people's lives should be subject to debate by those whose lives they affect. In an age of globalisation, this process becomes both more important and more difficult. Decisions most affecting people in Zambia are increasingly as likely to be taken in Geneva, London or New York as they are in Lusaka.

The importance and fundamental influence of globalisation issues in shaping the destinies of developing countries have been intensively debated, but conclusions are rarely either simple or consensual. The issues of international trading rules, the power of the WTO, the international frameworks and intellectual property regimes governing new genetic and medical technologies, the international environment shaping the deployment of information technologies, efforts to tackle global environmental problems - these and other key issues of globalisation are rarely subject to clear-cut solutions, where the choices facing developing countries are simple and easily defined, where disagreements are easily resolved.

These issues are normally complex, sometimes highly technical and those with most to win or lose from the outcomes of these debates – the poorest in developing countries – often have least opportunity to contribute to them.

An underlying principle of all Panos' work is that societies should be driving and shaping their own development agendas, and responding as much as possible to the economic, political and social challenges they face through proactive, internally driven, locally owned processes of political and social change. All countries face challenges in adapting to rapid change in an increasingly globalised world, and developing countries particularly so.

Change is unlikely to be sustainable, however, unless people have some sense of ownership of the process of change.

The characteristics of globalisation – a series of complex, contentious, interconnected phenomena over which developing countries have little control – lend themselves very strongly to the methodologies employed by Panos. Panos' task is to explain often complex issues as clearly as possible, to get that analysis out to as wide a public as possible (especially in developing countries), to stimulate and catalyse informed public debate within and between countries without actively engaging in debates ourselves; and to feed perspectives from the South, particularly from those most marginalised, to international audiences.

The Institute is being increasingly urged and has the opportunity to carry out important activities in these areas (examples include a World Bank/Panos sponsored debate on globalisation and poverty, regional meetings for the media held in Africa in advance of the regular WTO ministerial meetings as well as recent initiatives supported by the Rockefeller Foundation on intellectual property rights and public health and on catalysing public debate on genetically modified organisms). Panos has an important contribution to make by ensuring that developing countries are able to shape their own agendas and responses to these issues.

Recognition of the importance of ownership in defining poverty reduction strategies, and the central role of communications in achieving ownership

The international community has committed itself to halving the number of people living on less than a dollar a day by 2015, as well as to a series of other ambitious Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has also reached an increasingly strong consensus on the key strategies it will use to achieve these goals. Central among these are poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs) being promoted by the World Bank, and major southern led initiatives such as the New Economic Partnership for African Development, NEPAD.

The Poverty Reduction strategies are, according to the World Bank and other proponents, different from earlier strategies in one critical way. They are designed to be shaped, developed and, above all, owned, by the countries they are designed to benefit. Donors, multilateral organisations and other development actors are increasingly committing themselves to working together collaboratively within a long-term strategic framework (a Comprehensive Development Framework, in the World Bank's parlance) that is established by the countries themselves.

Such ownership can only happen, Panos argues, if two key processes are in place. First, that people, particularly those with most to win or lose from the poverty reduction process, have access to information on the issues and strategies relevant to them; and second that they have the capacity to make their voices and perspectives heard in the public arena so that the development of strategies such as PRSPs can be informed by their perspectives.

In other words, ownership requires vibrant, inclusive country and community driven public debate. Without such debate, the pillars of ownership on which these strategies stand will be weak and fragile. That debate can only take place if the media within the countries concerned provide publics with the information they need to make sense of these issues,

and provide channels for people to communicate and debate their views in the public arena.

The PRSP process is already being implemented in 39 countries. Substantial efforts have often been made to consult with many stakeholders – including civil society - in the development process, but as the World Bank acknowledges, such processes have been too limited and too often confined to a relatively small number of stakeholders. In only a very few cases has there been substantive public debate, particularly within the media, on these issues.

The opportunities for such debate within the media are becoming both much greater and much more limited. On the one hand, an increasingly democratic, vibrant, complex and diverse media and communication environment in most developing countries is providing many new channels and spaces for people to make their voices heard. In Uganda, for example, there are more than 80 FM radio stations, which have emerged over the last five years, with some of the most popular programming often being talk shows and debates. On the other hand, this same media is increasingly commercial, competitive, urban and consumer oriented, and decreasingly interested in covering issues of poverty and marginalisation.

The result is that in many countries implementing poverty reduction strategies, the level of public awareness, understanding and ownership of the processes is extremely limited, and the opportunity for people – particularly the poor and those in rural areas - to access and contribute to discussions on these issues, is equally limited.

The role of communications and media in raising awareness, understanding and ownership, and the limited extent to which this is currently happening, is central and has recently been highlighted by the World Bank in a sourcebook on poverty reduction strategy processes.

The evidence to date is that little effort is being made to make these debates accessible to those whose lives they mostly affect. That situation needs to change and provides a major challenge to those working in the media and communication field.

Panos has already published a well received report on PRSPs and has worked to advise the World Bank on its communication strategies around PRSPs (and was initially asked by the World Bank to prepare a strategy for it, which Panos, while grateful to be asked, felt it could not do without compromising its independence). Panos has also organised substantive public debates and in country briefings on PRSPs in Uganda, Ethiopia, Zambia and Cambodia and plans to expand this work substantially in the future, particularly by the regional Institutes.

Further information about PRSPs may be found in a Panos Report explaining PRSPs which can be found at www.panos.org.uk (under media briefings). The World Bank's paper on communication and PRSPs, which Panos advised on, can be found at <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/chapters/communication/stratcom.htm>.

Appendix 5

ICD and the MDGs (audiovisual)

This 22 minute video shows how computing, the internet, mobile phones, radio and satellite information systems can help achieve the UN goals. Produced by the BBC for DfID, it focuses on five stories in Bangladesh and Senegal. A copy has been submitted with this report. Further copies are available free of charge for development purposes, from DfID.

Appendix 6

The Consultant

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