

FRANCE

General Department for International Co-operation and Development

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I. The DGCID's strategy and general approach to using information and communication technologies to promote development

The General Department for International Co-operation and Development recognises that four possible approaches to the use of ICTs to promote development and narrow the digital divide must be put on an equal footing:

- Upgrading access and communications infrastructure;
- Developing local content and using ICTs to share knowledge;
- Establishing national action plans for entering the information society, and legal and regulatory frameworks conducive to the growth of networks (exposing the telecommunications sector to competition, but also protecting consumers, supporting freedom of speech, backing introduction of independent administrative authorities and competition judges, etc.).
- Educating people at all levels, from introducing the general public to multimedia to providing specialised training for the engineers, graphic designers, webmasters, managers of community access points, policy-makers, legal scholars, academics and researchers needed to achieve the first three objectives.

Initiatives must therefore seek simultaneously to support the proposed supply (content, services and applications), demand (users' ability to connect) and the interface between them (national policy, legal framework), while at the same time creating the conditions conducive to sustainable appropriation of these technologies (training).

References and Internet links: <http://www.diplomatie.fr>.

II. The main means of integrating ICTs into overall development strategy

II.1 *Four policy approaches to combating the digital divide*

For the General Department for International Co-operation and Development (DGCID), combating the digital divide entails a pro-active policy taking the following four approaches:

II.1.1 *Developing access to networks*

Projects for interconnecting research networks in co-operation with RENATER (French Research Network)

The DGCID works closely with the RENATER public interest group (MJENR, CNRS, INRIA, CEA, CNES, INRA, CIRAD), which owns the national telecommunications network for technology, education and research (www.renater.fr). Moreover, Europe's national networks are consolidated into the pan-European GEANT consortium, which currently interconnects 32 countries in Europe with infrastructure that is unique in the world (www.geant.net). The consortium is also supporting an EU-funded project in connection with the Eumedis initiative. The programme (Eumedconnect) seeks to identify education and research networks in the countries of the Mediterranean basin and to interconnect them amongst themselves and with GEANT.

Creating a network of community Internet access points: the ADEN project

The ADEN is working to create and develop community Internet access points in Priority Solidarity Zone Countries¹, the objective being to help lower individual connection costs by pooling access. Alongside the project will be support for the development of value-added services at the ADEN centres, such as local hosting of Internet sites.

Duration: 3 years – beginning in 2003

Amount: €6 million

Target countries: Priority Solidarity Zone (PSZ)

Support for the establishment of Internet exchange points in Sub-Saharan Africa

The Ministry will lend support for the establishment of Internet exchange points in Sub-Saharan African countries in order to lower bandwidth prices and accelerate data transfers between local users. This support will take the form of high-level training for technicians and initiatives to heighten awareness in this area.

II.1.2 Development of local content and use of ICTs in order to share knowledge

Promoting African scientific research via NICTs: the SIST project

Local content can be developed by fostering the establishment of networks between organisations that acquire, adapt and disseminate content for non-commercial purposes, and especially academic and research content. In this connection, in 2003 the DGCID will launch the SIST (Scientific and Technical Information System) Programme to develop instruments for scientists in the South, based on the use of innovative technologies. The aim is to provide a cross-disciplinary complement to incentive programmes in support of research. Giving the South access to its own wealth of scientific knowledge will enable researchers to promote sustainable development by enhancing their own analytical and expert capacities in major fields.

Thus the project aims to:

- Create South/South and North/South networks of researchers;
- Harness the South's scientific knowledge;
- Enhance regional and international dissemination of African research;
- Develop ICT-based instruments for the benefit of scientists in the South.

Duration: 3 years – beginning in 2003

Amount: €3 million

Target countries: Priority Solidarity Zone

E-government development support project for good governance

The purpose of this project is to use NICTs to enhance government performance in Priority Solidarity Zone countries to foster the better governance.

Under preparation

Amount: €1.5 million

Target countries: Priority Solidarity Zone

PROCOOPTIC Programme to promote ICTs in Africa

This project, now being finalised, offers a dynamic of initiatives comprising some 20 sub-projects. It aims to develop proficiency and assess Internet use in connection with

1. A list of Priority Solidarity Zone countries can be found in §IV.1.

development applications. It includes training measures and awareness-building campaigns (Internet festivals in Africa), support for the production of Internet applications and services (documentary productions, literature and African literary criticism, networking of constitutional courts and national human rights institutions, networking of the African press, archiving and online editions of the African press, French-language rural development resources) and establishment of an observatory of the integration of ICTs in Africa.

Duration: 4 years, expected to end in December 2003

Amount: €3.5 million

Target countries: African Priority Solidarity Zone countries

II.1.3 Support for the establishment of legal and regulatory frameworks and for the formulation of national policies for developing ICTs

The ARTIC Project to support the regulation of ICTs

The development of the Internet entails adapting or redefining a large number of laws. While these naturally include laws opening up telecommunications markets to competition, they also include laws to protect privacy and freedom of speech, regulate electronic commerce and protect copyright. The issue of the regulatory environment has not been covered sufficiently, yet it is essential for the developing countries. In 2003, the DGCID is planning to initiate the ARTIC Programme, which will address this problem.

II.1.4 Training Internet agents

Training programmes to complement the establishment of access points

These will dispense training in Internet use, organisation, management of access points, network engineering and electronic publishing.

Production of training materials

Participation in the "Internet in the South" CD-ROM project: reference library on technical, economic and legal issues raised by the information society. Comprises publications, draft legislation and training manuals. A project undertaken by UNITAR with support from the International Organisation of Francophone Countries, the FAO, UNESCO, WIPO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

RESAFAD Project for a network of French-language support for the adaptation and development of information and communication technologies in education

Includes instruction for trainers to consolidate and develop national expertise in the use of ICTs for education and training (<http://www.resafad.net>).

II.2 Participation in multilateral programmes

II.2.1 France's participation in the Francophone Information Highway Fund (FFI)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs contributes over €1 million to the Francophone Information Highway Fund, which co-finances projects submitted by organisations or businesses of Francophone member countries. The Fund's projects are concentrated in the areas of education, research, institutional development and the media, and economic development.

II.2.2 France's participation in Infodev, the World Bank's programme of new information technologies for development

Initially designed to finance or co-finance NICT-related initiatives in developing countries and transitional economies, the aims of the Infodev Fund are to:

- Respond to requests by local communities and the governments of the countries involved;
- Assist donors as an instrument of their policies to combat the digital divide.

Project areas include: online government, health care (telemedicine), education (remote education, equipment for schools and universities), the environment, electronic commerce, telecommunications and rural development. Projects seek to bolster infrastructure, promote training, support national development policies, reinforce legal and regulatory frameworks and develop innovative Internet applications.

France has contributed €300 000 to Infodev

II.2.3 France's participation in the United Nations' Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

France is participating financially in the United Nations' Information and Communication Technologies Task Force. The purpose of the Task Force is to construct a joint vision of the overall architecture of the information society in order to achieve the objectives of the Millennium Declaration. More specifically, the Task Force formulates proposals to:

- Narrow the digital divide;
- Institute comprehensive policies and common rules for governance.

II.2.4 France's participation in UNESCO's "Information for All" Programme

France contributes financially to UNESCO's "Information for All" programme, the purpose of which is to narrow the gap between the "information rich" and the "information poor". The Programme offers a platform for international discussions and the formulation of projects geared towards:

- Understanding the ethical, legal and societal consequences of ICTs;
- Improving access to public information;
- Preserving information.

II.3 Especially representative cases / examples of best practices

II.3.1 Support for the development of content and applications tailored to the needs of people in the South, and if possible produced by them

The following components of the PROCOPTIC Programme are worthy of note:

Passdev Project: Gateway to French-language resources for rural development

The aim of this project is to facilitate access to, and the circulation of, sources of French-language information about rural development. To accomplish this, a number of actions have been undertaken: a resource guide was prepared and an Internet site, including discussion forums, was created. The objectives are to support electronic publishing and the dissemination and enhancement of information by agents of rural development in the South. The project is carried out by the Inter-Réseaux Association with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<http://www.passdev.net>).

Creation of an observatory of the integration of information and communication technologies in Africa (Africa'nti)

The Africa'nti project is an observatory of the integration and impact of information and communication technologies in Africa. By offering a coherent vision of the evolution of these technologies and how they are used, the project seeks to explore the implications, including those on a spatial level and more particularly in the realm of trade. The project is carried out by the joint CNRS/IRD research unit Regards (Recherche en économie, géographie, anthropologie sur les recompositions et le développement des Suds) (<http://www.Africanti.org>).

Since 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been supporting initiatives to develop services and applications involving public Internet access points, and to help set up projects. With a view towards reinforcing the economic sustainability of access points, the Ministry has supported the "Villes Internet" Association's Internet twinning projects between cities in the North and cities in the South. As a result, associations of cities can jointly develop projects in particular areas (such as health care, rural development, etc.) based on Internet access points and making use of new technologies. As a result of such twinings, permanent ties have been forged between French entities and their counterparts abroad, and particular services have been developed around public access points (<http://www.villes-internet.net>).

II.3.2 Training and awareness-building

FORCIIR Project (further training of computerised networked information) (a component of the PROCOOPTIC Programme)

- Training of archivists, librarians, documentalists and journalists in French-speaking Africa;
- Training of multimedia specialists in partnership with the Universities of Dakar, Rabat, Yaoundé and Tananarivo (<http://www.ebad.ucad.sn/forciiir/>).

Technical training in the administration of servers, domain names and routing on Linux

This initiative, as part of the support for Nigeria's national strategy for the development of NICTs for government, was organised jointly between the national NICT development agency, the University of Ile Ife and the French Embassy in Nigeria.

The two-day session brought to the campus 35 network managers from Nigerian institutions (federal commissions, ministries, universities) and Nigerian and Senegalese trainers. Thanks to the initiation, the main Nigerian institutions were presented with unique, coherent and inexpensive solutions for managing their networks, and they were shown how to use them, and a mutual help forum was set up for the various administrators and trainers in Senegal and Nigeria itself.

Projects to heighten public awareness of the Internet

Support was provided for the organisation of the African Internet Festival (<http://www.f-i-a.org>) in more than ten African countries, and a network of Internet festival co-ordinators was set up.

II.3.3 Support for the formulation of legal and regulatory frameworks

The "Law and the Web" Project (*Projet droit et toile*)

This project encourages emerging and developing countries to set up legislative frameworks conducive to the development of the information society. It includes training schemes in the laws governing the Internet and new technologies and the establishment of a

network of legal specialists featuring discussion forums and publication of an electronic newsletter and an international journal of Internet law in emerging and developing countries. The project is carried out by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research with support from the Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Organisation of an international seminar on "Legal Issues in the Information Society" in December 2000

During the seminar, the state of French and other European work on legal and regulatory aspects of the information society was reviewed. As a result, dialogue with non-European countries was extended in order to compare experience and to pool the questions posed by information society issues, as well as attempted responses.

Underwriting the participation of African countries in the international correspondent network of the AFNIC (French Network Information Centre)

This organisation promotes the sharing of experience between national domain name managers.

International seminar on electronic government to serve citizens

This seminar, which was held in January 2002 by the Council of State with assistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explored legal aspects of the use of digital technologies by public authorities, taking a comparative approach.

III. Measures taken at institutional level

III.1 Creation of a New Technologies office

In 1999, the DGCID set up an office for new information and communication technologies, with a scope of action concentrated on co-operation in the realm of new technologies, and in particular on the fight against the North/South digital divide.

In addition, the DGCID's industry directorates (scientific, academic and research co-operation, technical co-operation, cultural and French-language co-operation) appointed specialised ICT correspondents and thus incorporated NICTs into their development plans.

These projects are being undertaken with French partners (ministries, universities, research centres and associations), who take part in project planning and implementation.

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IV. Main countries targeted by the strategy of development incorporating NICTs

IV.1 Priority Solidarity Zone countries

In North Africa:

Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia.

In Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean:

South Africa, Kenya, Angola, Liberia, Benin, Madagascar, Burkina-Faso, Mali, Burundi, Mauritania, Cameroon, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Namibia, Central African Republic, Niger, Comoros, Nigeria, Congo-Brazzaville, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire, Sao Tome and Principe, Djibouti, Senegal, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Tanzania, Ghana, Chad, Gambia, Togo, Guinea, Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea.

In Asia:

Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam.

In the Caribbean

Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Suriname.

In the Middle East

Lebanon, Palestinian territories, Yemen.

In the Pacific

Vanuatu.

IV.2 Main beneficiaries

Local associations, research centres, universities, ministries.