

CoRICs initiative in Dominica
Challenges and progress in 2006



UNV Volunteer in Dominica
United Nations Development Programme
December 2006

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. ICT for Development initiatives in Dominica.....	4
3. CoRICs activities accomplished.....	5
Paix Bouche.....	5
Good Hope.....	5
Petite Soufriere.....	5
4. CoRICs Stakeholders Meeting.....	6
5. Challenges.....	8
6. Recommendations.....	9
7. Annex	
A. Agenda: CoRICs stakeholders meeting on November 27, 2006	
B. Presentation: CoRICs Business Planning Toolkit created by UNDP Intern Heejung Kim, Aug 2006	
C. Presentation: CoRICs products and service contents created by UNV Keisuke Taketani	
D. Presentation: ICT in Dominica created by Sylvester Cadette, Telecom Advisor	
E. Document: The Community / Commercial Telecentre created by Sylvester Cadette, Telecom Advisor	
F. CoRICs contacts list	
G. CoRICs online group website	

1. Introduction

The Community Resource and Internet Centers (CoRICs) initiative is one of the first Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) projects implemented by the UNDP under its poverty reduction programme for the Eastern Caribbean. It aims to promote and enhance access to ICT in small, rural agrarian communities.

Dominica was the first CoRICs country and remains well advanced in its efforts. The CoRICs launched formally in 2005 is resident in three rural communities – Good Hope, Petite Soufriere and Paix Bouche.

As CoRICs Dominica has accomplished the phase of acquiring building space, furniture computers and other equipments, it needs more technical support on capacity building, creation of products and service contents and strategic business planning. In this context, some international volunteers visited CoRICs in 2006. From June to August, UNDP Intern visited Dominica to conduct situation analysis and Business Planning Toolkit development. The intern specialized in business administration, produced a toolkit that is practical and tangible. In the final reports, the followings is the summary of analysis as well as business planning.

- Of the three centers, Paix Bouche and Good Hope, two centers are currently being operated. Both two centers are generating enough revenue to cover their operational costs, however, the financial status should be improved soon to make it self-sustainable
 - All three centers have difficulties in network and equipment maintenance. Geological isolation makes it hard for them to receive timely service, so it is important to make them capable to fix simple problems on their own. UNDP can consider providing repair training to the coordinators as well as community members
 - Financial performance analysis showed that both centers should increase number of customers as well as utilization level of each customer
- Improvement plan has been developed across four key areas: product, pricing, promotion, and operation. For each area, specific examples and templates were developed to help management committee implement these ideas and apply them according to the local situation
 - Product: Diversify revenue sources and help people use internet for their benefit
 - Pricing: Provide diverse offerings to increase utilization
 - Promotion: Increase customer awareness on new initiatives
 - Operation: Structuralize organization and provide incentive to the coordinator

From August, an International United Nations Volunteer began his assignment with CoRICs to follow up on Business Planning as well as conduct capacity building such as Training for trainers (ToT). After sharing the Business Planning Toolkit with community members and agreeing to develop business plans for each community, coordinators and management committee members are now actively involved in creating new products and service contents. On national level, various ministries and NGOs showed their interest in establishing a strategic partnership to implement ICT projects such as e-agriculture, telemedicine and distance learning.

In September, the communities welcomed three new Peace Corps Volunteers assigned to village council and particularly to CoRICs. They are expected to assist CoRICs activities in general. Some of them have already started organizing computer classes for youth.

Lack of high-speed Internet connection and maintenance skills has been a common challenge and proposed solutions are in action. Cable and Wireless now offers high-speed Internet connection in every community and it is expected that connections can be established in early 2007. Due to low availability of human resources in IT to provide maintenance in the community, it will be outsourced to local technical supplier to provide machine inventory, maintenance and basic training for coordinators.

There still remain obstacles to achieve self-sustainability for CoRICs, but some steps forward have been made in 2006. This report will summarize CoRICs activities.

2. ICT for Development initiatives in Dominica

- The government is planning to formulate a National ICT policy to facilitate ICT and ICT-D for development in the country. Ministry of Housing, Lands, Telecommunications, Energy & Ports is responsible for national ICT issues including national ICT Policy draft proposal planned to present in the first quarter of 2007.
- Establishment, Personnel & Training Department – Reform Management Unit is the leading agency for e-Government/e-Governance. The creation of Information and Communications Technology Unit (ICTU) as well as e-Government Steering Committee is in process. Government portal website should be completed in December 2006.
- As a part of Agriculture Diversification Programme, Ministry of Agriculture is implementing Agriculture Information Management System (AIMS) to create content management system and e-agriculture. In collaboration with Dominica Export Import Agency (DEXIA), Product Supply Forecast System (PSFS) has initiated in 2004.
- Ministry of Health currently moves from paper based system to electronic system and patients' registration and billing data and information has recently completed and stored in database at Ministry electronically. It plans to establish a national network to connect rural health care center to provide telemedicine, on-line consultation and e-learning for health care workers.
- Ministry of Education Youth Division continues to support computer skill training for Youth. There are five Telecentre operating and providing various ICT courses. The youth graduates have high ICT skill-set which open new opportunities for themselves.
- Local government is responsible for ICT for community development. There are already twelve Telecentres in total and active village councils are seeking funding for the help to establish Telecentres.

Type of Telecentre	Community	Contact
CoRICs	Good Hope, Petite Soufriere, Paix Bouche	Local government
Youth Skill Training	Portsmouth, Grand Bay, Roseau, Castle Bruce, Wesley	Youth Division
Private donation	Bense	Local government
Canadian Fund for local initiative	Penville	Local government
UNESCO	Dubuque, Carib Territory	UNESCO
List of Telecenters in Dominica		

3. CoRICs activities accomplished

Paix Bouche

- Basic computer summer course was completed for children aged 9 – 15 for which a graduation ceremony was held. Nineteen (19) students registered and sixteen (16) completed the course. Tuition was EC\$ 10 per person. The coordinator was the instructor;
- Planning to start a basic computer course for adults; and
- Providing Services: Renting computer (\$1/hr), printing (black & white 30 cent, color 50 cent), Internet (\$5/hr dial up) services.



Graduation ceremony at Paix Bouche computer summer course

Good Hope

- Completion of a three (3) months computer course which was done in two parts; one for primary school students and the other for secondary school students;
- There is an ongoing homework programme;
- Successful programme with the management committee; done in collaboration with Christian Children Fund (CCF) and the Local Government Department;
- Sale of stationery as fund raising;
- Use of the internet for \$ 2.50 for half an hour;
- The coordinator participated in a sub-regional conference regarding small communities telecentre and net working, sustainability etc. in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in July, 2006; and
- Submitted a proposal to WiLAC for a project of Deployment and Strengthening of Community based Wireless Networks in Latin America and the Caribbean. The proposal was selected as a pilot community, yet due to mountainous topography it seems difficult to deploy the network.

Petite Soufriere

- There are six (6) computers at present, however four (4) are non functional and are sent for repairs;
- The two (2) functional computers are being used by eighteen (18) children, who are coping with the situation and are doing well so far;
- Committee member went to sub-regional workshop in Grenada regarding organic farming and small business; and
- Instructors and coordinators are using training material provided by UNV Training of Trainers.

4. CoRICs Stakeholders Meeting - Good Hope Resource Center on November 27, 2006

The CoRICs Stakeholders Meeting was held at Good Hope Resource Center on November 27, 2006. The participants include CoRICs coordinators, CoRICs management committee members, village council members, Local government Commissioner, Mr. John Fontaine, Director of Telecommunication, Mr. Sylvester Cadette, Youth Development Officer at Youth Division, Mr. Colbert A. Pinard, Local government District Development Officers, Peace Corp. Volunteers, United Nations Volunteer.

Opening remarks

Mr. Fontaine emphasized the importance of the CORIC's programme in the communities. He expressed support of the Local Government Department in working in the three (3) main communities. He spoke of the importance of the Youth Division who do similar programme and encouraged the need for collaboration.

CoRICs Business Planning Toolkit

United Nations Volunteer, Keisuke Taketani, gave updates with respect to connectivity, maintenance and technical supports and leadership training opportunity. Then he presented the CoRICs Business Planning Toolkit and explained that it needs to be adopted by each community based on their circumstances. During open discussion, Mr. Colbert Pinard suggested that persons need to empower themselves to make the programme more sustainable. He also said that funding can be sought from agencies, and that the centre could get help in training from certain agencies. He emphasized the need for training since persons want to learn about computers.

ICT in Dominica

Mr. Cadette presented the ICT regulatory and concept of Telecentre. He informed the meeting that the proper framework, tools and legal environment is needed for any development project.

- Everything has become electronically controlled e.g. telecentre, tele-training, tele-communicating, e-mail, e-commerce, e-banking, e-governance, e-administration, e-education etc and if you are not part of it you are out;
- Communities can grow with a cyber economy, explained the importance and benefits of an e-



Presentation of Mr. Sylvester Cadette at Stakeholders meeting

Deleted: a

- economy such as job creation, economic development, diversification etc;
- Governments telecoms policy and the liberalization of the sector, resulting in overall economic, social and cultural benefits for the people of Dominica;
- Explained the role of National Telecommunications Regulatory Commissioner (NTRC) and Eastern Caribbean Telecommunication Authority (ECTEL) who oversees national telecom sector policy;
- Tele communications also occur at Government level. He described the legal and regulatory framework, which occurs at the national and regional level, and Telecommunications Act # 8 of 2000 opens Dominica's communications market to competition;
- Described the roles and function of a tele- centre (resource centre) as follows: to provide education, to meet people, to serve as a positive factor to keep persons from negative factor;
- Suggested for sustainable service and the provision of other services etc. An open day was also suggested with proper advertisement through posters, advertisements on radio and television so that persons could be aware of what's going on;
- The computers in their possession should be well maintained utilized and should be kept as long as possible;

Group discussion / presentation

In the afternoon session, CoRICs potential products and service contents and strategic partner was presented by UNV to diversify scope of work. CoRICs capacity and ICT toolset can be used for the development of Education, Healthcare, Agriculture, Small and Medium Enterprises, Culture, Tourism, Risk Management /Disaster recovery, Local government among others.

As group discussion, the participants were divided into three (3) groups to discuss (a) Prioritize three (3) area of work (i.e. Education, Agriculture, Health care, etc) that CoRICs may work next year; and (b) List five (5) idea of project that CoRICs can develop within the selected area.

Group presentation showed variety of ideas that coordinators and management committee members have for the future.

Group1:

Agriculture

- Marketing
- Organic farming
- Live stock, fishing, floral, fauna
- To identifying markets for all products
- Effective use of herbs for medical use
- Machinery and mechanical form

Tourism

- Development of community website (advertising, sites, accommodation, product, music, dances, national flag dress feast)

Local Government



During the Group work at Stakeholders meeting

- Facilitators training
- Funding agencies
- Involvement of communities' group
- Community projects
- Involving youth

Group2:

Education

- Computer literacy programme
- Homework clinic
- Adult education
- Student discount
- Parenting session / HIV/AIDS
- Post papers (electronic copies to be made available to students)
- On-line application form
- Design community website
- On-line courses
- Computer programme for pre-school

Agriculture

- Marketing (export and import)
- Organic farming information
- International trade information
- Weather forecast (Hurricane tracking)
- Moon phases

Culture

- Community web page (activities, histories, Dances – links, pictures, videos, symbols and meanings, Music bands, cultural group, "community member of the month")

Group3:

Health

- CoRICs can liase with District Health Team
- Create a website providing article on HIV AIDS
- Clinical Bulletin Boards

Education

- Resource persons to facilitate programmes and getting finance form it for the building
- Homework clinic
- Reading session for students
- Distant learning
- Intercultural Property Rights

Culture/Agriculture

- Website design for promotion of culture
- Composting of organic manure
- Promotion of bay oil distillates for tourist attraction

5. Challenges

The followings are most common challenges that communities face during the implementation:

- Financial sustainability, difficulties in fund raising because CoRICs are located in small, rural agrarian communities;
- Lack of stable high-speed Internet connection: ISP has expanded the service coverage and Cable Internet connection is available in the three communities, but none of them have connection;
- Lack of PC maintenance equipment maintenance skill. The three communities experience machine breakdowns and network problem;
- Difficulties in maintaining contacting with national and sub-regional organization to establish strategic partnership;
- Low awareness and interest in ICT in the community;
- Not able to share experience, knowledge and training materials among Telecentres; and
- Lack of leadership skill of management committee to set direction of CoRICs.

6. Recommendations

The followings are recommendations to operate, maintain and strengthen CoRICs centers:

- Creation of special courses for different categories. Each community shall prioritize categories and design courses and UNDP and local government shall provide necessary materials and Training of trainers (ToT);
- Management committees need to develop strategic planning skill and create annual work plan;
- Promote dialogue and knowledge sharing among CoRICs sub-regional network. On-line group for CoRICs stakeholders shall be utilized to exchange ideas and experiences;
- Annual CoRICs sub-regional meeting coordinators and tutors is recommended;
- UNDP should play a key role to establish Telecenter Network at National level and sub-regional level. This also empowers relations to other institute supporting similar community development projects;
- CoRICs website for both sub-region and communities established. It can be designed as sub-regional resource center and knowledge-sharing site;

- Creation of strategic partnership. Ministries such as Health, Agriculture and Education are interested in collaboration with CoRICs;
- Introduce distance-learning opportunity. University of West Indies and other Universities may offer special support for students using CoRICs as tool for distance learning;
- Connectivity. High-speed internet connection should be in place urgently;
- Diversify revenue source such as Internet call;
- Contract local supplier for equipment and network maintenance. Coordinators and tutors need to have skill set for basic PC maintenance and repair;
- Expansion of CoRICs. There are interests from other communities to establish. Application was submitted to Wireless in Latin America and Caribbean (WiLAC) to establish a wireless network among CoRICs and key remote points in the community such as health care center, local schools, community centers and fishery complex;
- Empower management committee to take a lead on CoRICs strategy and direction;
- Provide incentive to the coordinators based on performance and as outlined in the business plan outline by the UNDP Business Intern; and
- Conduct social event and promotion to increase customer awareness in the community.