THE INTRODUCTION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION FACILITIES TO TURN TABLE TRUST AND THE HLANGANANI REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM

BACKGROUND

Turntable Trust (TTT) is an NGO based in a remote area in the KwaZulu/Natal Province of South Africa, which provides a range of services dedicated to the alleviation of poverty. Details of its Mission and activities are found on its Website at http://wn.apc.org/ttt

TTT works closely with the Hlanganani Regional Development Forum (HRDF). This is a forum of the major stakeholders involved in development in the Hlanganani District.

OBJECTIVE OF PROJECT.

The objective of the project was to determine the effect of the introduction of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) on the operations of TTT and HRDF, including to evaluate the specific intervention.

ENVISAGED ACTIVITIES

In liaison with the Hlanganani Regional Development Forum :-

- Purchase and install two workstations - one for TTT and one for HRDF.
- Organise the training of three members of staff of the Trust, plus two members of HRDF in the use of Windows 95 and Wordperfect Office, using local trainers.
- Organise for the same people to be trained by Sangonet in the use of the Internet.
- Regular use of the Internet.
- Liaise with Sangonet to enable them to design a Website for TTT.
- Work with the HRDF to facilitate community access to the Internet.
- Commence an ongoing process of strategic planning within the Trust and the Forum regarding the future use of ICTs in the organisation.
- Host a workshop to discuss and assess the impact this project has had.
- Prepare a funding document to invite donors to participate in developments arising from this project.

TRAINING

The HRDF

The liaison with the HRDF re this project is ongoing. The computers have formed, and will form an integral part of the interaction between the staff of the Trust and the HRDF. However the members of the HRDF showed a reluctance to be trained to use the computers. They have enjoyed the more professional work that the staff of the Trust have produced for them with the aid of computers, but will not use the technology themselves.

The HRDF have also enthusiastically selected a group of scholars from their areas to be trained.
These young people have shown enormous commitment, learnt rapidly, and can now use the computers with confidence.

The curriculum offered to them included

- Use of the mouse;
- Loading programmes from Windows 95 (Solitaire and Typing Tutor).
- Wordperfect 7
  - Using the tab button.
  - Making words bold.
  - Underlining words
  - Using the fonts
  - Deleting words
  - Use graphics
  - Print one or many documents
  - Save the document
- E-mail
  - Sending E-mail.
  - Opening the Mailbox.
  - Receiving and replying to E-mail messages.
  - Deleting E-mail messages.
- Browsing
  - Found Websites relevant to the HRDF (TTT, Healthlink, Sangonet, Unisa etc)

In addition, two community members were trained to use the computers and the Internet. One of these, Staff Ngwane, now has a part-time job typing the *Sunrise Newsletter* for the HRDF on a monthly basis.

**TTT**

Five members of the staff of TTT were trained in the use of Windows 95 and the Internet. In addition another two have been trained by one of the first trainees to use the computers.

All of the original five can and do use the E-mail facility regularly and use the Internet on a regular basis.

**WEBSITE OF TTT**

This is now complete and has been visited by people from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and a community in Dwarsrivier who have contacted us via E-mail - very exciting!

**STRATEGIC PLANNING**

A strategic planning exercise was done with the staff of TTT. This was to assess our work and ourselves and plan the way forward for the Trust. The report on this exercise was then forwarded to the Board of Trustees for their input and approval.

The effect of all our projects was assessed by ourselves including this project.
Issues identified by the TTT staff themselves were :-

- **Centralisation of all authority/Responsibility.**
  The lack of computer skills and computers had led to a distinct centralisation of all authority being with the main office of TTT. This caused an unequal work load and an artificial positioning of authority.

- **Lack of Training and therefore lack of confidence in their ability to train.**
  The Primary Health Care Worker, Rosemary Mabi was one of these who felt she did not have enough knowledge of her subject to be effective. On the other hand, she feels that the use of the E-mail, especially the contact it provides with the Healthlink network, has been wonderful for her. She has benefited from the case histories they are doing on the E-mail.

- **Lack of communication with other organisations similar in aims to TTT.**
  Was a previous weakness that has to a certain extent been, and is being, rectified by use of the Internet.

Similarly, it emerged as part of our general planning for 1998 that TTT is not well known to Provincial and Government Departments. We are using E-mail to rectify that in addition to the fact that our reports are now more professional has made us all feel more confident.

**PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED**

- Lack of typing skills of the trainees retarded the progress of the training.

- The tardiness of Telkom in installing the second telephone delayed the project by four months.

- The community trainees expected to earn money from the project once they were trained.

- The initial level of expertise of the trainees before the training has left us with a need for further training to refine our skills.

In other words only now do we know what we need to know !

**THE IMPACT THAT THIS PROJECT HAS HAD ON OUR WORK**

- Communication between ourselves, the HRDF and the far outlying communities has been met to a certain extent by the monthly publishing of the Sunrise Newsletter. This would not have been possible without the expertise that we now possess.

- Our reports are of a much more professional standard than before. This has made us far more confident with donors.

- The system has proved to be very cost effective for the Trust as we now produce our own Letterheads, Compliment Slips, Invoices and Statements.

The most important effect this project has on the work of the Trust is the decentralisation of authority. Due to the improved expertise of the staff and the subsequent increased...
confidence a definite departmentalisation is emerging. This has led to formation of a management hierarchy which has been one of the long term goals of the Administrator. The present redistribution of authority and responsibility has enabled two senior members of staff to take on new roles and functions which will lead to the expansion of the work of the Trust.

THE WAY FORWARD

As a result of our strategic planning exercise and the discussion we had during a visit by the IDRC’s Kate Wild and Christopher Geerdts, the following has emerged:

- The staff of TTT had adequate training in the use of Windows 95, but needed more training in Web browsing.
- The need for two data base programmes has been identified - one being for the Business Advisory Centre and one for the training programmes department.
- TTT will be contacting their bankers about electronic banking.

August 1997