

Remarks at the
Telecentre.org Launch

IDRC Pavilion at WSIS
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Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome. On behalf of the International Development Research Centre, I thank you all for joining us today in celebrating a remarkable initiative—telecentre.org.

To begin, it is a special pleasure to acknowledge the active participation of representatives from grassroots networks in Chile, Sri Lanka and Uganda. And it is an honour to salute IDRC's investment partners in telecentre.org—the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and Microsoft Corporation.

Microsoft has demonstrated extraordinary vision in making an initial investment of \$12 million (Canadian) to make telecentre.org possible. For our part, IDRC has taken up Microsoft's invitation to participate as the lead organization in this global collaboration. IDRC will be contributing \$5 million in funding, while our friends at SDC are contributing five million Swiss francs.

To understand this shared vision—to see the rich promise in telecentre.org—we should focus first on the growing value of telecentres for development.

Throughout the developing world, in remote villages and poor city neighbourhoods, telecentres bring the empowering benefits of the information economy into the lives of ordinary people. Telecentres are already helping people overcome isolation and poverty, gain access to medical care or government services, and create new economic opportunities for themselves and their communities.

Telecentres provide a community gathering place, where people can use the Internet, learn new skills, and mobilize families and neighbours to address local social problems.

But not all telecentres have the resources they need, or the people, or the knowledge. Telecentre.org can help them strengthen their capacity for success.

IDRC has a long history supporting telecentres for development, from Africa and Latin America to Asia. And we have encouraged some pioneering research that is now paying development dividends.

Building on that experience, with our partners today, we are proud to be hosting this launch of telecentre.org. It is my pleasure now to introduce Ndaula Sula, who is with the UgaBYTES Initiative in Uganda. Thank you.