# Pilot Multipurpose Community Telecentres in Selected Barangays in the Philippines

A project by the Philippine Council for Health and Research Development (PCHRD) of the Department of Science and Technology

An evaluation and reporting on the implementation process and results of the Multipurpose Community Telecentres Project in Northern Mindanao.

## "A Place of Hope"

for the

IDRC

by
Roger Harris

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## Executive Summary

The Philippine Multipurpose Community Telecentre (MTC) project has piloted the concept of rural development using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Among the important outcomes of the pilot, the project has successfully co-ordinated various government agencies towards the installation of four such centres in Mindanao, although difficulties in achieving telephone connections have hampered the full operation of two of them.

However, all the centres are yet to demonstrate their full potential for inducing social development. Among the reasons for this, the most significant are:

- The purpose of the MCTs is not well understood by the recipient communities.
- The provision of information to the MCTs has not been rooted in the problems and information needs of the communities as defined by them.

The project has yet to demonstrate the full potential of ICTs for inducing rural development and therefore that a rural MCT can or should be made sustainable. However, it has accumulated sufficient momentum and considerable experience, knowledge, and commitments as well as an enabling infrastructure, to now make that possible provided a number of important steps are taken.

It is imperative that the project unambiguously illustrates the benefits of rural ICTs and masters the ability to secure such benefits before the Philippine Government embarks on a wider programme of rural connectivity. Without such assurances and learning, any such programme runs the considerable risk of squandering scarce resources.

Accordingly, the project must now:

- Implement at least one significant information system in a rural MCT that clearly demonstrates the potential of ICTs for achieving tangible improvements in community livelihood and/or well being.

- Establish a community-based mechanism for identifying community problems and for eliciting and satisfying suitable information needs for their solution.

- Develop capacity within recipient communities for making full and effective use of their MCTs in the pursuit of community empowerment and social development.

The project has made possible a number of vital lessons. The most significant is that:

**Whilst technology is necessary for ICT-induced rural development, on its own it is not sufficient for development to**

**take place. MCTs should be regarded as instruments for development not as technology artefacts. For MCTs to foster desirable outcomes, development capacities have to be strengthened alongside technology capacities**.

The project has given rise to several valuable opportunities that can now be seized, among them, the most important are as follows:

### Opportunity No. 1.

Run a competition among the MCTs for the best development-inducing application.

### Beneficial outcome

Rural communities that are alerted to the capability of MCTs by a demonstration of their potential and by building local capacity for designing and implementing their own development agenda.

### Opportunity No. 2

Set up a "Newsroom" with appropriate community web site software and staff in one of the four MCTs to act as a hub for acquiring and disseminating useful development-oriented information to the other MCTs.

### Beneficial outcome

Demonstrated value of the internet to rural communities that will ignite their development aspirations and elevate their ambition horizons.

### Opportunity No 3.

Undertake a detailed social study in at least one of the MCT communities to identify typical community problems and suitable information resources to help solve them.

### Beneficial outcome

Proven replicable methodology for eliciting information needs that are based on solving community problems and for designing information systems capable of doing so.

Given the above actions, there can be no doubt that this project will surmount the final hurdle and realise its full potential. That it should now do so carries important implications for the Philippine Government and its rural population, who require unequivocal evidence that ICTs can induce development in rural communities, and a clear understanding of how this can be made to happen. Both are required before an expensive nation-wide programme is embarked upon. Rural MCTs must progress from being a "place of hope" as Dr. Torrijos characterises them, to being a "place of certainty".

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An evaluation and reporting on the implementation process and results of the Multipurpose Community Telecentres Project in Northern Mindanao.

### Terms of Reference

### Purpose of the Project Evaluation

The purpose of the project evaluation at this stage is to identify critical factors in project implementation and present them in the form of a collection of lessons learnt. This learning evaluation will become a part of the process to produce practical guidelines for the establishment of a sustainable network of multipurpose telecentres in Philippine barangays and in the short term to provide an input for decisions regarding the extension of the current phase of the project and follow-up activities in the future.

### Objectives of the Evaluation

The evaluation is expected to:

- Provide an analysis of the process of developing the concept of the multipurpose community telecentre and implementing the telecentre applying a participatory approach
- Provide input for future decisions concerning telecentre projects in the form of lessons-learned recommendations.

### Duties and Responsibilities

The Consultant will undertake the evaluation and reporting of the following issues:

*Project planning and organisational structure:*
a. Has the design of MCT project objectives addressed issues of importance for rural communities and the Philippine Government? Did it respond to actual needs?
b. Did the choice of participatory approach, major activities and management structure correspond with project objectives and effective implementation?
c. Was the project designed with adequate monitoring and evaluation procedures, including performance indicators and means of verification?
d. What was the commitment and involvement of different stakeholders (i.e. DOST, village communities, Philippine Government Departments, local organisations, CIDA, IDRC)?

*Effectiveness*
a. Has the implementation of MCT activities been effective in reaching the project objectives?
b. Did the activities result in concrete results for beneficiaries (Barangay communities)?
c. Did the project foster broad collaboration of different organisation and government agencies?
d. Were the technical problems solved effectively?
e. Are the lessons-learned well documented by the project staff?

*Project results*
What are the mid- and long-term benefits of the project implementation: i) individual, ii) at

the community and local authorities level, iii) at the national level?

*Outputs and Reporting*
The evaluation will provide reports on issues listed in section Duties and Responsibilities and concentrating on the following:

- An assessment of progress to date in achieving the objectives of the MCT project, as checked against project documents
- An assessment of project results as perceived by barangay communities, local authorities and DOST
- A summary of lessons-learned concerning the involvement of rural communities and local specialists, resolving technical problems of connectivity, development of information materials addressing the needs of barangays, computer users training, collaboration of all stakeholders and project management.

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*A Place of Hope*

# Connecting People and Organisations For Rural Development Through Multipurpose Community Telecentres in Selected Philippine Barangays

## A Learning Evaluation

Roger W. Harris
July 2001

# Connecting People and Organisations for Rural Development through Multipurpose Community Telecentres (MCTs) in Selected Philippine Barangays

## Learning Evaluation, June/July 2001

Roger W. Harris
For the
IDRC

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## Executive Summary

The Philippine Multipurpose Community Telecentre (MTC) project has piloted the concept of rural development using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Among the important outcomes of the pilot, the project has successfully co-ordinated various government agencies towards the installation of four such centres in Mindanao, although difficulties in achieving telephone connections have hampered the full operation of two of them.

However, all the centres are yet to demonstrate their full potential for inducing social development. Among the reasons for this, the most significant are:
- The purpose of the MCTs is not well understood by the recipient communities.
- The provision of information to the MCTs has not been rooted in the problems and information needs of the communities as defined by them.

The project has yet to demonstrate the full potential of ICTs for inducing rural development and therefore that a rural MCT can or should be made sustainable. However, it has accumulated sufficient momentum and considerable experience, knowledge, and commitments as well as an enabling infrastructure, to now make that possible provided a number of important steps are taken.

It is imperative that the project unambiguously illustrates the benefits of rural ICTs and masters the ability to secure such benefits before the Philippine Government embarks on a wider programme of rural connectivity. Without such assurances and learning, any such programme runs the considerable risk of squandering scarce resources.

Accordingly, the project must now:

- Implement at least one significant information system in a rural MCT that clearly demonstrates the potential of ICTs for achieving tangible improvements in community livelihood and/or well being.

- Establish a community-based mechanism for identifying community problems and for eliciting and satisfying suitable information needs for their solution.

- Develop capacity within recipient communities for making full and effective use of their MCTs in the pursuit of community empowerment and social development.

The project has made possible a number of vital lessons. The most significant is that:

**Whilst technology is necessary for ICT-induced rural development, on its own it is not sufficient for development to take place. MCTs should be regarded as instruments for development not as technology artefacts. For MCTs to foster desirable outcomes, development capacities have to be strengthened alongside technology capacities.**

The project has given rise to several valuable opportunities that can now be seized, among them, the most important are as follows:

| Opportunity No. 1. | Beneficial outcome |
|---|---|
| Run a competition among the MCTs for the best development-inducing application. | Rural communities that are alerted to the capability of MCTs by a demonstration of their potential and by building local capacity for designing and implementing their own development agenda. |

| Opportunity No. 2 | Beneficial outcome |
|---|---|
| Set up a "Newsroom" with appropriate community web site software and staff in one of the four MCTs to act as a hub for acquiring and disseminating useful development-oriented information to the other MCTs. | Demonstrated value of the internet to rural communities that will ignite their development aspirations and elevate their ambition horizons. |

| Opportunity No 3. | Beneficial outcome |
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| Undertake a detailed social study in at least one of the MCT communities to identify typical community problems and suitable information resources to help solve them. | Proven replicable methodology for eliciting information needs that are based on solving community problems and for designing information systems capable of doing so. |

Given the above actions, there can be no doubt that this project will surmount the final hurdle and realise its full potential. That it should now do so carries important implications for the Philippine Government and its rural population, who require unequivocal evidence that ICTs can induce development in rural communities, and a clear understanding of how this can be made to happen. Both are required before an expensive nation-wide programme is embarked upon. Rural MCTs must progress from being a "place of hope" as Dr. Torrijos characterises them, to being a "place of certainty".

## 1. Terms of Reference

The purpose and objectives of the evaluation, taken from the terms of reference, are repeated below

### 1.1 Purpose of the Project Evaluation

The purpose of the project evaluation at this stage is to identify critical factors in project implementation and present them in the form of a collection of lessons learnt. This learning evaluation will become a part of the process to produce practical guidelines for the establishment of a sustainable network of multipurpose telecentres in Philippine barangays and in the short term to provide an input for decisions regarding the extension of the current phase of the project and follow-up activities in the future.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Evaluation

The evaluation is expected to:

- Provide an analysis of the process of developing the concept of the multipurpose community telecentre and implementing the telecentre applying a participatory approach
- Provide input for future decisions concerning telecentre projects in the form of lessons-learned recommendations.

### 1.3 Duties and Responsibilities

The Consultant will undertake the evaluation and reporting of the following issues:

*1.3.1 Project planning and organisational structure:*

a. Has the design of MCT project objectives addressed issues of importance for rural communities and the Philippine Government? Did it respond to actual needs?

b. Did the choice of participatory approach, major activities and management structure correspond with project objectives and effective implementation?

c. Was the project designed with adequate monitoring and evaluation procedures, including performance indicators and means of verification?

d. What was the commitment and involvement of different stakeholders (i.e. DOST, village communities, Philippine Government Departments, local organisations, CIDA, IDRC)?

*1.3.2 Effectiveness*

a. Has the implementation of MCT activities been effective in reaching the project objectives?

b. Did the activities result in concrete results for beneficiaries (Barangay communities)?

c. Did the project foster broad collaboration of different organisation and government agencies?

d. Were the technical problems solved effectively?

e. Are the lessons-learned well documented by the project staff?

### 1.3.3 Project results

What are the mid- and long-term benefits of the project implementation: i) individual, ii) at the community and local authorities level, iii) at the national level?

### 1.3.4 Outputs and Reporting

The evaluation will provide reports on issues listed in section Duties and Responsibilities and concentrating on the following:

- An assessment of progress to date in achieving the objectives of the MCT project, as checked against project documents
- An assessment of project results as perceived by barangay communities, local authorities and DOST
- A summary of lessons-learned concerning the involvement of rural communities and local specialists, resolving technical problems of connectivity, development of information materials addressing the needs of barangays, computer users training, collaboration of all stakeholders and project management.

## 2. Analysis

## 2.1 Project planning and organisational structure

> a. Has the design of the MCT project objectives addressed issues of importance for rural communities and the Philippine Government? Did it respond to actual needs?

The project objectives are stated in the proposal as:

> To develop and test a pilot information and communication system (barangay telecentre) encompassing people, organisation, infrastructure and processes that will support rural communities in achieving sustainable development.

The Philippine government has emphasised ICTs in its national development through its IT Action Agenda for the 21$^{st}$ Century (IT21) by which "the Philippines will have laid the infrastructure for every business, every agency of government, every school, and every home in the Philippines will have access to information technology by the turn of the 21$^{st}$ century." The design of the MCT project objectives is fully in accord with this aspiration. The project is responding to the paucity of telecommunications capacity in rural districts of the country and to the acknowledged potential of ICTs to induce locally initiated development activities. Acknowledging that some 70% of the nation's 70 million people live in rural communities, the project is a direct response to

the rural development imperative and to the emerging prominence of ICTs in the Nation's development plans.

Whether the design of the MCT project objectives responded to actual needs is less clear. In this regard, two areas of need can be identified. Firstly, the need of the government to understand the issues involved in bringing about ICT-induced rural development, and secondly, the need of individual communities in understanding how they can mobilise their own resources towards effective exploitation of technology that results in the implementation of solutions to real problems.

The government needs to understand, for example, the following:
- How will the activities of the various concerned government departments, local authorities, entrepreneurs, NGOs, the private sector and ordinary people be co-ordinated at national level for the delivery of positive consequences of rural ICTs on other rural development activities.
- What are the most effective technology options for the various applications, in particular geographical, social and cultural environments, taking account of existing rural infrastructures?

Rural communities need to understand, for example:
- How should they be helped to participate actively in the production of information and knowledge that is relevant to them?
- What does it take to adapt information and learning material developed in foreign, affluent countries, as well as within their own country, to the needs of less-well educated, sometime illiterate populations in rural and remote locations in the Philippines?
- How should Telecentre services be managed and marketed in rural and remote locations?

The MCT project has achieved more in relation to the first, government, set of needs than it has to the second, community, set of needs. Whilst the experience of sensitising and co-ordinating the various government agencies towards MCT installation has generated useful knowledge for a subsequent wider implementation, a thorough understanding of the basic needs of the communities involved was not factored into the project design. Typically, social studies can be used to provide such understanding, but no evidence was found of a comprehensive study of the pre-existing socio-economic profiles of the target communities or of their information and development needs as they themselves would express them. The workshop consultations provided a starting point, from which such information could be gathered, but they were not followed through in detail and no prioritised action plan seemed to have emerged from them. By generating a list of topic areas that would be of interest to the recipient communities, the workshops allowed the participating government agencies to identify their existing information resources that could be

made available to the recipient communities. In practice there is scant evidence (one instance was found) that such provision had achieved significant impacts at ground level, and no mechanism (participatory or otherwise) seems to have been established to follow through on the effectiveness of these provisions and how they might be modified in order to increase their impact.

The model of "information push" that is being built into the project, whereby government agencies nominate subject experts for tele-consultations as well as making their databases available, goes some way toward providing information that is perceived by government planners to be useful to rural communities. The approach could be strengthened if it were augmented by a bottom-up component of information needs solicitation that is firmly anchored in an expression of the communities' needs, as they themselves express them.

> b. Did the choice of participatory approach, major activities and management structure correspond with project objectives and effective implementation?

The extent of participation, on questioning and on observation, was characterised as the involvement of barangay councils in the operation of the MCTs. The results of this approach are apparent in the extent to which the councils have appropriated the facilities as their own; evidenced by the community at Jaliobong that is constructing a new building to house their MCT, and by the community at Malingao which provided air conditioning. More opportunities exist for a deeper level of participation that will embed the MCTs firmly within the fabric of daily life within the communities, leading to more strategic use of the ICTs, based on the communities' problems and stated information needs.

Participatory approaches to the development of information systems have a long track record that points to their positive effects. Often, though, participation exists more in the intent of a project than in its execution. In the MCT project, participation of the communities has been harnessed as the mechanism to achieve custodial authority over the equipment and premises, a not unimportant aspect of MCT operation. The opportunity now exists for further participatory activities that will lead to the MCTs having more significant developmental impacts. Community members can be encouraged to participate more in the information gathering and dissemination that will lead to tangible social development. Ultimately, substantial gains will only be achieved if communities are empowered to design and implement their own development agendas. In this regard, a preference for collaborative and participative modes of inquiry and system development will prove to be superior, not in the least as it serves to acknowledge that:

- Information systems are more than technical artefacts, as they embrace the behaviours and aspirations of the people using them. Rural user communities are the best placed to assess their own aspirations and to assign their own priorities with regard to which information systems they need. The rural communities in the project in Mindanao are not homogeneous and unified approaches to the solution of their problems are unlikely to achieve widespread adoption or success.

- Information systems in the Philippines are spreading beyond formal organisations and into society at large, creating an empowering process that can be facilitated through a commitment to participatory systems development. The communities in Mindanao have achieved the first step, of technology adoption. They are now poised for the next stage, that of information literacy. Participatory approaches that involve community members in specifying and delivering their own information needs have the highest chances of desirable outcomes, but they are yet to be installed in the project.

- Institutional interpretations of information systems, and the formulas that are applied to design them, often assume a structured context that is not in fact always present. The Mindanao rural communities are complex social organisms; they have their own social dynamics and a wide diversity of interests, and the solutions to their problems will be highly local and highly specific. It is almost impossible for outside, distant, institutions to capture the full meaning and impact of the local context in a way that would allow them to deliver effective information-based solutions to the daily problems of rural communities. Short exposures to the project communities in Mindanao reveal significant differences between them, and between the potency of the various community processes that are judged to be on the critical path towards desirable outcomes from ICT deployments. Such community processes include their aspirations, learning, capacities, organisation, unity, participation, relationships, and personalities. Each of these processes will influence the development and implementation of useful information systems in each MCT community. Their influence is best accommodated within participatory approaches that foster local contributions as the major component driving information systems design.

- The Mindanao communities should be encouraged to focus on uses of ICTs that are independent of the intentions or aspirations of the providers of the technology, instead of being encouraged (even indirectly) to satisfy the institutional interests that may accompany the deployment of that technology. Information providers within the project will inevitably introduce their own bias and agenda into the content that they will make available to the recipient rural communities, whereas the communities themselves will focus directly on the information they need. Participatory approaches should be employed to ensure this happens.

The major activities of the project corresponded closely with the imperative of marshalling and co-ordinating the government and community based resources and agencies in establishing the physical MCTs. Four MCTs have been set up, with suitable accommodation and equipment, and they are staffed by trained personnel. Information provisioning has begun but there is little to show for this as yet in terms of tangible social development, and doubts exist as to the effectiveness of the approach adopted for information provision. The communities have been sensitised to the basic operations of the equipment, but they are as yet unaware of its full potential to induce substantial social benefits.

The management structure of the project was appropriate to its objectives, although some weaknesses emerged. Firstly, problems with the provision of connectivity resulted in two of the MCTs suffering long periods of disconnection. In one case, all the Public Call Offices in a province were out of action for more than a year, causing the loss of internet connections to two MCTs. Connectivity was beyond the control of the MCT project management. As a critical success factor for the project, this created some weakness in the management structure. The inclusion of connectivity providers as full management partners in responsibility for achieving project outcomes might have focused higher levels of attention on the connectivity problems sooner than was the case, thereby offering greater probability of an earlier solution.

> c. *Was the project designed with adequate monitoring and evaluation procedures, including performance indicators and means of verification?*

The review did not detect any formal means of evaluation as built-in components of the project design. This does not mean that evaluations did not take place, but that they were informal, or ongoing, as described by the project management. A number of formal indicators were expressed in the project design, but they do not seem to have been operationalised or evaluated in a systematic manner during the life of the project. Some important formal indicators could have been attached to some of the project objectives, e.g.;

- The objective, "to develop the capability of the local population and partners in developing indigenous information applications," and,
- The objective, "to determine the impact of MCTs in the village life and in neighbouring villages"

Some form of e-readiness assessment could be used to assist in the development of local capacity for creating indigenous applications. Several models of e-readiness are available internationally that could inform such an evaluation for the MCT project. Impact assessments are also possible using a variety of methodologies. For the

current purposes, the forthcoming visit by the PANTLEG team should be capable of providing useful feedback to the project on the impact of the MCTs within the recipient communities. Both of these assessments carry their own verification procedures.

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*d. What was the commitment and involvement of different stakeholders (i.e. DOST, village communities, Philippine Government Departments, local organisations, CIDA, IDRC)?*

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*DOST*
The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) assigned project implementation to its Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD). The project manager has other duties besides this project, but a number of other staff are also participating in support. PCHRD has experience with the implementation of a health system, which seemed to make it an easy choice as implementer for this project. DOST is fully committed to the project, thorough its Secretary (at cabinet level) and through its regional representatives.

*Village Communities*
Village communities have taken charge of the MCT installations, through the barangay councils. They provide volunteer staff to operate the MCTs and to assist other members of the communities make use of the facilities. The communities demonstrated full commitment to the MCT project and in at least two cases have manifested this in a tangible manner. In particular, the school pupils, teachers and principals were vocal supporters of the project as well as being heavy users.

*Philippine Government Departments*
A variety of government agencies have been identified as information providers. In some cases they have provided information resources to the MCTs, either as hard copy documents or in digital format on CD-ROMs. No evidence was discovered to indicate that the providing agencies are seeking to discover how their information is being used, and consequently, how its provision might be enhanced. It is unclear how these agencies are preparing themselves to provide wider access to digital information that they have in their possession and that could be usefully provided to the MCTs via the internet.

The Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) plays a key role in providing internet access to the MCTs. The problems encountered by the project, which have left two of the four centres without access, seem to indicate either less than optimum commitment by DOTC and/or insufficient inter-departmental co-ordination at the appropriate level.

*Local Organisations*

Local organisations have contributed in several places;

- training has been provided by local education establishments,
- a local NGO has been engaged to document the MCT set up process,
- the regional office of DOST has provided administrative support, and
- the regional TelOf (Telecommunications Office) of the DOTC has managed the connectivity arrangements and has provided troubleshooting services.

These contributions have been instrumental in achieving the current level of MCT operation. It is evident that the relationships that have been fostered between the project and these (as well as other) local institutions can continue to furnish valuable resources. Opportunities now exist to engage with local and national research institutions and with local and national NGOs. This would help to create a framework for engaging more closely with the community processes that need to be mobilised in order to achieve more concrete benefits from the operations of the MCTs.

*CIDA and IDRC*

Representatives from CIDA and IDRC have visited the project from time to time, at the rate of two to three visits per year. As far as it is possible to tell, meetings with the project management and visits to some of the MCTs served as informal evaluations and assisted with advice on key aspects of project development. The forthcoming visit by the PANTLEG team (planned for January 2002) will provide a more comprehensive evaluation and learning opportunity. Official visits do not seem to have generated any formal documentation for the project, although meetings were minuted. The project proposal did not suggest specific milestones at which such visit/evaluations might be usefully conducted, and it is unclear how the timing of such visits was determined.

Similar projects might pre-define the points at which external evaluations can contribute most towards achieving the project outcomes, possibly even stipulating the type of evaluation that is performed (e.g., base-line study, social assessment, technology assessment, web site design and usability, impact assessment, etc.). As a PANTLEG member, the project has access to a collection of knowledge resources that is both wide and deep, and project representatives can be organised into a self-supporting network capable of mutual advise and assistance at any time it is required (in addition to the once-a-year cross visits that are currently undertaken). The value of IDRC funding for PANTLEG members' projects seems to be more in the knowledge sharing that takes place between them than in the monetary award to the project activities. IDRC might consider this aspect of their funding activities as part of future strategies for project support, for instance, by facilitating a greater level of interchange among project members.

## 2.2 Effectiveness

> a. Has the implementation of MCT activities been effective in reaching the project objectives?

For the purpose of responding to this point, there would seem to be three parts to the project objectives:

- *To develop and test a pilot information and communication system (barangay telecentre),*
- *encompassing people, organisation, infrastructure and processes,*
- *that will support rural communities in achieving sustainable development.*

The project has achieved the first part, although it was stated in the proposal that "alternative models for operating MCTs will be tested and documented" and "the aspect of ownership will be specially addressed." It is not clear that this has been achieved as stated, although much has been learned from the pilot that can inform such considerations.

For the second point, the project has been effective in acculturating the communities to ICTs, and in sensitising government agencies and local institutions to the aims of the project. Development of the physical infrastructure is less certain, given the difficulties of sustaining internet access for two of the MCTs, but a logical infrastructure of information providers is now in place. The process of content creation is under developed, as it does not yet provide for a formally defined role for the communities themselves, who have not yet attained the level of empowerment that will grant them the independence they will need in order to generate lasting information systems of real benefit. Other processes are yet to be harnessed; particularly the community processes that will foster development oriented activities that make full use of the ICTs.

> b. Did the project foster broad collaboration of different organisations and government agencies?

The project has been able to foster broad collaboration among different organisation and government agencies, but the outcome of this collaboration has not yet matured. The relationship with DOTC needs to be strengthened at decision-making level. Information providers need to be made aware of how their information is being used. Training organisations should reinforce their capacity for aligning their training products more closely to the purpose of the MCTs. Local organisations (probably

NGOs with ICT capabilities) should be recruited for purposes of social development within the communities themselves.

| c. Were the technical problems solved effectively? |
| --- |

In all the MCTs, the equipment was in working order and power supplies were stable. The most pressing technical problems concerned the dial-up internet connections. In addition to the two centres that were disconnected for more than a year, the connections to the other centres seemed particularly fragile. The remoteness of the MCTs caused problems for the DOTC support staff, and the connectivity equipment used was either subject to theft or vandalism or long delays for replacements from overseas. Uncertainties with the connections diverted the attention of the communities towards the technological aspects of the project, possibly retarding their motivation to explore the use of ICTs to solve community problems.

| d. Are the lessons-learned well documented by the project staff? |
| --- |

So far, the project documentation has incorporated little material that has been specifically designed to document any reflections or evaluations that have taken place. This does not mean they have not occurred, but the absence of documentation implies certain difficulties in communicating them among team members and project partners and arriving at a consensus on how to proceed in the light of the findings. A set of materials was collected from each barangay for this review, and they provide raw data for MCT usage statistics as well as reflections by the volunteers. These are valuable sources of information and their collection should be institutionalised and refined, so that they can be better understood, interpreted and acted upon by project staff and MCT managers. For example, usage statistics should be condensed and categorised, and then tracked and reported weekly to project staff. Volunteer stories can be collected and shared on the internet for purposes of learning and experience accumulation and for confidence building. Eventually, significant success stories can be showcased in appropriate outlets, including the mass media, in order to spread awareness and to foster greater levels of community action towards self-improvement.

## 2.3 Project results

*What are the mid- and long-term benefits of the project implementation: i) individual, ii) at the community and local authorities level, iii) at the national level?*

*a) Individual benefits*

Individuals in the project team, associated agencies and in the recipient communities
have accumulated the capacity to implement rural ICT projects centred on MCTs.
The relationships that have been negotiated over the life of the project so far represent
a valuable investment that will soon repay its full return. The learning processes that
necessarily precede an innovative programme such as this project represents are well
under way.

*b) Community and local authority benefits*

The concept of the Multipurpose Community Telecentre is now well known within a
wide variety of Philippine agencies, although its full potential is yet to be realised and
demonstrated. The value of ICTs for rural development is unquestioned among all the
project stakeholders, and that is a potent lever. Among the communities directly
involved, the school children are currently the primary beneficiaries and they and
their parents are well satisfied with that. All actors recognise and appreciate the value
of improvements in education that the MCTs are able to deliver. Local authorities
other than the barangay councils have been less involved in the project so far. In the
long term, as a national rural MCT programme gets under way, they will be able to
deliver their services to their citizenry via the internet. A question remains with
regard to the indigenous Lumad community of Caraga, some of whom live in and
around at least one of the MCTs in that region. It does not appear that as a
community, their special needs are being incorporated into the project design.

*c) National benefits*

Governments embarking on a programme of rural development with ICTs have a long
learning curve to negotiate. This project has made an important contribution to
establishing a starting place on that learning curve for the national authorities that will
be tasked with carrying forward the lessons into a wider implementation. One
challenge now for the project team is to ensure that those lessons are recognised and
made available to others who will follow. Without the learning available from this
project, a national Philippine programme for rural ICTs would be severely
handicapped.

## 2.4 Outputs and Reporting

The evaluation is required to concentrating on the following:

> ▪ *An assessment of progress to date in achieving the objectives of the MCT project,*
> *as checked against project documents;*

The objectives of the MCT project as originally conceived cannot yet be said to have
been fully achieved. However, more has been achieved than was originally envisaged

within the stated objectives. This is not untypical of pioneering ICT implementations. Evaluations of this type, therefore, need to steer a course between a rigid comparison of actual outcomes compared with anticipated outcomes, and a more flexible assessment of what was achieved that is desirable in terms of the evolving nature of the project's goals. Inevitably, the process of applying IT to a social problem changes the nature of the problem itself, as the problem reveals more of itself to the project implementers. In such circumstances, evaluations serve the purposes of the project best by highlighting the evolving nature of the project objectives within the context of the project actions that are designed to achieve them and that have to be regularly re-aligned in order to do so. In addition to the unanticipated, yet still desirable, outcomes, the project will have goals that were stated and expected, and which are desirable, but which may or may not have been achieved.

The project has achieved most of the goals it set out to in establishing four MCTs. The project is yet to fully realise the stated goals of;
- developing the needed content and information services
- determining the enabling factors that relate to the sustainable operation of an MCT
- determine the impact of MCTs in the village life and in the neighbouring villages
- testing alternative models of MCT ownership

According to the project proposal, "the primary output of this project is a model of operation for multipurpose community telecentres, in the form of guidelines, how-to materials, technical specifications, or sustainability plan, that guides the local people and program managers in expanding MCT operation to the rest of the country." Such a model has not yet been fully prepared, but the project has accumulated a great deal of knowledge that will enable the model to be created. There are deficiencies within the project that prevent the full specification of such a model at this time. More work is required to develop the how-to materials referred to and more knowledge is required to achieve a reliable sustainability plan. Moreover, there are also deficiencies in the original specification of what should be included in this model of operation. The project has usefully revealed these deficiencies. The model as specified does not seem to fully acknowledge that whilst ICTs are necessary to achieve the goal of community empowerment, on there own they are insufficient to do so. The challenge for the project now is to specify what else is needed and how to implement it. The model should include a mechanism that will ensure the recipient communities achieve empowerment through the use of ICTs. They need to be motivated towards strategic use of the technology through a mechanism that engages with the community processes previously described and is able to direct local energies towards a higher ambition horizon than currently exists.

Project implementers need to devise a means not only of developing the needed content and information services, but also of ensuring they are productively applied towards solving community problems. Both activities will be heavily influenced by

the social, economic and cultural context of the recipient communities. Consequently, participatory processes will contribute significantly towards both goals. The present approach of content creation is overly reliant on a top-down information push approach that has not so far taken sufficient account of community needs. The process adopted so far for identifying the information needs of the communities, that of the workshops, has provided a useful starting point in defining their broad areas of interest. But it is now necessary to go deeper, in a more specialised area of need, in order to demonstrate the practical gains that ICTs can deliver. The statement of broad information needs that the workshops generated do not take into account the many local factors that will determine which particular application should be addressed first. In most cases, successful implementations emerge from a combination of factors, only one of which relates to a broad understanding of information needs. The social dynamics of the communities themselves will determine which applications are given priority at any time. For example, a farmer in Maguinda, named Dodong, happened upon some useful information from a CD-ROM concerning the rearing of ducks. He has used this to help him establish a breeding programme that is now supplying other farmers with breeder ducks. He now has the opportunities for developing his duck business further in several directions by using the MCT facilities. Maguinda could become a major duck rearing business centre. Such applications only emerge by chance from a top-down approach to information. The dynamics that motivated Dodong towards his duck breeding activities need to be better understood by the project so that they can be replicated in other places. The outcome of this activity has more to do with Dodong and his situation within Maguinda than they have to do with the provider of the information and the means of its provision. No equivalent examples were found in the other MCT communities (although there may be some) despite considerable probing.

With regard to the enabling factors that relate to the sustainable operation of an MCT, it is too early in the project to be able to specify these. A pre-requisite is to demonstrate that there is something worthy of being sustained, and this has yet to be demonstrated. However, the project has accumulated considerable knowledge concerning the factors that will make up the sustainability formula, and this should be recorded in the project documentation. Now is a suitable time to begin to specify the conditions for sustainability of rural MCTs in the Philippines. The factors that will need to be considered can now be defined. The potency of their contribution towards sustainability can now be assessed and the means of measuring their impact can be specified. The project will then be able to go into the field at a suitable time and assess the likelihood of sustainability of any of the MCTs. The sustainability formula will be specific to the Philippine context, about which the project has now accumulated sufficient knowledge to be authoritative.

The next goal that the project has yet to fully achieve is that of determining the impact of MCTs in the village life and in the neighbouring villages. This is readily achievable with a survey and some social analysis. The forthcoming PANTLEG visit will also contribute to this goal. However, in view of the fact that the MCTs are not yet contributing to the economic and social welfare of the communities anywhere near to the extent that they could be, the impact enquiry at this stage could well focus on the extent to which the community is ready to go further with their ICT activities as well as highlighting some likely applications that would enable them to do so. Enquiries of this nature cannot be treated in isolation. The process of asking questions usually has the primary effect of getting an answer as well as a secondary effect of getting the respondents to think more about the question, why it is being asked and what will be done with the answer that they provide. This characteristic of social engagement can be put to good effect, by using the survey as a catalyst for co-ordinated community action towards further, strategic, exploitation of their ICT resources.

Finally, the goal of testing alternative models of MCT ownership would not logically be achievable until after the sustainability factors have been specified and are ready to be tested in the field. The goal assumes that alternative models will emerge from the sustainability considerations. There may only be one viable model.

In this project, additional goals appear to have emerged after the original goals were specified and as a direct result of the project experiences. Firstly, the project was required to engage with the challenge of achieving robust connectivity to the MCT sites, which were originally selected on the basis of them already enjoying (or able to enjoy) reliable connections. The project did not expect that the difficulties which arose in supplying internet connectivity to at least two of the MCTs would cause the problems that they did. At the time of this review, it seemed that a solution was imminent, but the delay had caused a prolonged setback to project progress and diverted considerable energies from other activities. With hindsight, perhaps the challenge of connectivity was underestimated, but the lesson is that factors that sit on the critical path demand special attention, which should be incorporated into the processes of project management from the outset. Securing high level participation at DOTC is expected to alleviate any future such setbacks. Secondly, the goal of community development, which may have been undervalued during project conceptualisation, or which has not has not yet been perceived as a priority, now seems to be critical if the communities are to take full advantage of the MCTs. The project needs more "Dodongs of Maguinda". The competition suggested under the opportunities in section 3 will go some way towards achieving this new goal.

> ■ *An assessment of project results as perceived by barangay communities, local authorities and DOST.*

All the barangay communities are happy to be participating in the project and they did not express any complaints about their experiences (other than the lack of internet connection). In particular, the schoolteachers and principals were delighted that their pupils could receive computing knowledge and experience, as were the pupils themselves. The barangay councils were happy to be able to use the computers for their own administrative purposes. The level of community satisfaction is commensurate with their expectations. However, their expectations now need to be stimulated towards higher levels of achievement, commensurate with the potential of the technology, if the desired development outcomes are to materialise. Local authorities, other than barangay councils, are not heavily involved in the project. The Regional Director of DOST in Butuan, Caraga Region, did not express any dissatisfaction with the project and he outlined several other regional ICT initiatives that will benefit from the MCT project experiences. DOST executives expressed satisfaction with the willingness of communities to participate in the way that they have, as well as the degree of co-operation achieved with partner government agencies. Success indicators for this project were identified as political will, usage of the facilities and trained personnel, all of which had been achieved.

> ■ *A summary of lessons-learned concerning the involvement of rural communities and local specialists, resolving technical problems of connectivity, development of information materials addressing the needs of barangays, computer users training, collaboration of all stakeholders and project management.*

*The involvement of rural communities*
Involving the communities through the existing barangay council structure has been instrumental in recruiting them as accomplices in project implementation. However, this has not yet lead to the realisation of information systems that will significantly improve either their livelihood or their well being. It is now possible and necessary to build on this participatory spirit to ensure the communities fully appropriate the technology into their daily lives and use it to help them solve their most pressing problems.

*The involvement of local specialists*
Local specialists have provided useful resources for training and troubleshooting. This has sensitised them further to the conditions of rural life but it has not caused them to embrace the aims of the project or to modify their behaviours in its support beyond what has been asked of them by way of their normal duties. There is no criticism implied here, but local specialists will ultimately provide the first point of

contact to barangay MCTs who need help and will therefore heavily influence MCT achievements. The unique circumstances and potential of rural ICTs require that personnel in support positions are able to take the mission of the MCT to heart, and to adopt a flexible and "make-it-happen" approach to their responsibilities. Project authorities can instil into their local specialists a sense of responsibility for achieving outcomes rather than a duty for performing specified activities.

*Resolving technical problems of connectivity*
The major connectivity problems deprived two telecentres of internet access for more than a year. It seems possible that had contacts with DOTC been more effective and at a higher level than they were, then the problem would have been solved sooner (but this is speculative). Nevertheless, connectivity is a critical component of the project and as such should be under as much control of the project management as can be achieved within the circumstances. Given the significance of the project at the national level, special arrangements for obtaining reliable connectivity (not necessarily fast connectivity) would have been appropriate. DOTC could have attached a higher priority to the provision of reliable connectivity than was apparent. For example, it might have been prudent to ensure sufficient supplies of spare parts, batteries and solar power devices, to ensure a continuous connection to the MCTs instead of having to order them from overseas when they broke down.

*Development of information materials addressing the needs of barangays,*
The project has adopted a top-down information push approach to the provision of information materials, with some consultation at the barangay level. The results of this approach have been slow to materialise and there is no formal device for measuring the usefulness of the information provided and for feeding this back into an effective process that would respond to such measurement. The communities have adopted a passive stance as recipients of information that others will obtain for them. This has contributed to the absence of information systems with the capability of achieving significant improvements to community livelihood or well being. The recipient communities should be taught how to use ICTs strategically from the very start of the project, as it takes time to get used to the idea. A problem-based approach will quickly catch their attention and focus their energies towards the information they will really need and use. The project is adopting a concept of appointing subject experts, to whom communities will direct their questions when they need information. The choice of expert here seems to be critical. If they are too distant (e.g. a research institution) they are unlikely to be able to empathise with questioner's problems. If they are too close (e.g. a neighbouring farmer), they are unlikely to have sufficient expertise to answer the question. Nevertheless, experience from elsewhere suggests that with a little help from outside, rural communities can become expert in solving their own problems, and that this expertise can be readily passed on to neighbouring communities. Often, communities will have more confidence in local, neighbouring

experts than in distant ones. Information provision should be anchored firmly in the problems of the communities and should be driven by community needs that have been fully articulated by the communities themselves. Information providers should not be defined or appointed until community needs are comprehensively enunciated, otherwise, a pre-existing agenda of information provision emerges that has the capacity to stifle communities' ability and willingness to pronounce their own (possibly differing) information requirements.

Rural ICT projects need to be adept in the mechanics of eliciting and delivering community information needs. Information needs elicitation is achieved using appropriate participatory methodologies of enquiry that are based on anthropological and ethnographical techniques but which also lean on certain methods of systems analysis. Information delivery should combine top-down with bottom-up and side-to-side approaches, whereby external information is selectively and sensitively introduced into the local context, combined with local knowledge and then applied to the local problem. Out of this process, new knowledge emerges, and the information systems that are implemented to facilitate this process should be capable of effectively capturing and exploiting this new knowledge as it is created and put to use. Experience from elsewhere suggests that farmer-to-farmer networks are capable of contributing to the challenges of knowledge management among rural communities, provided the appropriate catalyst is in place. For this project, and for further replications, the "Newsroom" approach, described under opportunities in section 3, offers a potential means of achieving the propagation of new knowledge that can emerge from MCTs that are focused on solving community problems.

*Computer users training*
Training of users occurred in all the MCTs and it was successful with the following four provisos. Firstly, there were cases of gaps in time between the training taking place and the trainees using the skills they learned, with subsequent decay of their knowledge. Secondly, there seemed to be little opportunity for follow-up by the trainees if they ran into difficulties. Thirdly, the training was tool specific rather than task specific, which does not mean it shouldn't have taken place, but that it did not prepare the trainees well for the task they are expected to perform in the MCTs. One reason for this is that the task has not yet been comprehensively defined, beyond that of helping the community use the computers. Fourthly, there was at least one instance where community members felt they had to be trained by external (DOST) resources rather than members of their own community, and that the computer could not be used until some period of classroom training had occurred.

Training investments return the most value if they can be timed so that the training occurs in close time proximity to the use of the skills that are trained. On-line training materials can help to achieve this, and has other benefits. Technical support can be

arranged for MCT operators among themselves, using their own network. The training that has been given can be embedded within a broader approach to MCT operation. This would incorporate a more detailed coverage of information for development, the structure of the internet, the purpose of MCTs, customer service, publicity and marketing. MCTs can also assign a training task to an operator who can then provide training to other community members. The single best motivation for spreading computer knowledge is by demonstrating that it can be useful for solving local problems, and MCT operators have a role to play in achieving widespread use of their facilities via this method.

*Collaboration of all stakeholders and project management*

The project has achieved a commendable level of co-operation among project stakeholders; communities, local authorities and government departments. So far, partner organisations have performed as they were asked to. Yet there are still no information systems in place in the MCTs with the capability of achieving significant improvements to community livelihood or well being. A vital element is missing. Stakeholders appear to have co-operated to the full in what was asked of them, but they have gone no further. There is little evidence that organisations outside the implementing team have appropriated the aims of the project to the extent that they are willing to contribute ideas, short-cut their administrative procedures, adopt flexible and innovative approaches to project matters, or to act or think "outside the box". Of all the stakeholders other than the implementing team, it is the barangay councils and volunteers who have acted most in line with this philosophy.

Evidence suggests that pioneering projects concerned with rural ICTs in development need such approaches before significant gains can emerge. However, it is recognised that government institutions find it difficult to act in such a manner unless directions are given from very high levels. For this project (and perhaps for others) the lesson seems to be that existing government structures may not be the most appropriate for achieving the initial breakthroughs that are required to demonstrate the potential of rural ICTs. Yet it is acknowledge that widespread diffusion of ICTs among rural populations will require an institutionalised approach. More research is required to clarify the conditions under which ICTs can be successfully diffused to widespread rural populations, using the MCT model, but indications are emerging that a combined government and business-based approach holds promise. This project is likely to be in the vanguard of this line of enquiry if it stimulates such diffusion, and it is important for the international development community that appropriate learning and knowledge management measures are implemented in order to record and track future events and to foster an interpretation from which wider lessons can be drawn.

## 3. SWOT Analysis

This section provides the result of a SWOT analysis conducted by the reviewer. It provides observations on project Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats. The purpose of the analysis is to take stock of the existing situation of the project and to guide subsequent action. A SWOT analysis can be used for exploring possibilities and for decision making. It looks at future possibilities through a systematic approach of inspection into both positive and negative concerns. It can help administrators to quickly expand their vision. Probably the strongest message from a SWOT analysis is that, whatever course of action is decided, decision making should contain each of the following elements: building on strengths, minimising weaknesses, seizing opportunities, and counteracting threats. In order to be most effectively used, a SWOT analysis needs to be flexible. Situations change with the passage of time and an updated analysis should be made frequently.

The items under each heading do not appear in any particular order. The potency of points varies considerably.

### 3.1 Strengths

1. Four rural MCTs are in place, functioning and showing great promise for achieving rural development.

2. The project has created a substantial network of government and other agencies that are aware of the MCT concept, the potential value of rural ICTs and are motivated towards further support action.

3. Current users of the MCTs are the schools and the Barangay administration, which provides effective preparation for deeper infusion of ICTs intp community life, towards strategic uses of ICTs.

4. The project has accumulated vital experience in government inter-agency interaction and co-ordination that will be essential for a national rollout of any future rural ICT programme.

5. Communities have received the MCTs wholeheartedly, within the bounds of their aspirations and their understanding of the role of the MCTs.

6. Project staff and management are well versed with the challenges of rural development with ICTs and are capable of marshalling sufficient resources to ensure that dramatic improvements can be demonstrated.

## 3.2 Weaknesses

1. The adopted model for information flows to project beneficiaries is one of information push, like an electronic library, and is not strongly based on the stated needs of the communities.

2. Connectivity in at least two of the four MCTs has been problematic, and at the time of writing, remains so. The sites were chosen for, among other criteria, accessibility of telecommunications, yet two sites did not enjoy connectivity at the time of the review and suffered a history of unstable connection.

3. The communities have not been made aware of the strategic benefits of ICTs. ICTs have not been sufficiently infused into community life for the realisation of their full potential benefit.

4. The MCTs' strategies for information acquisition are not yet addressing the social and economic problems of their host communities.

5. There is little evidence yet of community empowerment as the project benefactors would wish to see it. The host communities do not fully appreciate the purpose of the MCTs.

6. The MCTs are mostly being organised to benefit those already with privilege and power; the pupils at school and the Barangay council members. Specific outcomes for marginalised sections of the host communities are not yet in evidence.

7. In most MCTs it is unclear who is in charge and how the MCT should be managed. Management of the MCTs is currently seen as the functioning of custodial duties with regard to the equipment, rather than the acquisition and deployment of information for community development.

8. In more than one instance, the internet is seen primarily as a fast mail delivery service.

9. MCT volunteers are uncertain about their role. Whilst often stated as helping the community, in practice, use of the MCT computers is mostly by the volunteers for their own school work and not for the social development of the community.

10. MCT volunteers have not always had the opportunity to provide community service in the MCT after receiving training, either because connectivity had not been achieved or they had moved away for further schooling or employment. Reliance on volunteers renders an unstable workforce, although there are advantages in obtaining the services of committed individuals without having to pay them.

11. Training of volunteers has sometimes taken place a long time before they were able to use the skills they learned. The value of training investments has therefore decayed seriously before any return is achieved.

12. There is no reliable mechanism for the volunteers to follow up with queries and difficulties after their training.

13. The key government departments are not effectively co-ordinating their activities and responsibilities for the project.

14. As a pilot, there is no unambiguous or concordant project success factor or indication of how it will be determined when the project is over (other than the fixed time period during which it has been executed). Moreover, there is currently no clear exit strategy for the project with regard to the MCTs that have already been installed

15. There are two critical success components within the project; connectivity and content, over which the project managers have no direct control. This places the project in the position of having responsibility for demonstrating desirable outcomes without the authority for achieving them.

16. The apparent difficulties of co-ordinating between DOST and DOTC have drawn project energies disproportionately towards the problems of connectivity. Apart from the immediate drawback of having two sites without an internet connection, this has served to focus attention unduly on the technological aspects of the project. The consequence has been that the social, behavioural and managerial factors concerned with MCT operations have not received the attention they require for optimal outcomes to emerge.

17. The model of information delivery focuses on information push, in which government agencies designate problem experts and make their databases available on line. Such a model (a "hub-and-spoke") may not be firmly anchored in the dynamics of real community needs, as it does not seem to contain a mechanism for identifying and tracking these needs. Furthermore, it seemingly excludes the potential benefits of farmer-to-farmer (network) interactions, which acknowledge the contributions available from within communities themselves and provides the necessary infrastructure to foster inter-community sharing, learning and problem solving. The problem is one of knowledge management for rural communities.

18. The principal beneficiaries are the school children and the Barangay administrations. As an outcome, this is desirable, but it is sub-optimal. All the MCTs, to a greater or lesser extent, operate as extensions of the local school. Most of the volunteers are school children. Schoolteachers and pupils are dominant among the active community users. When questioned about the most significant benefits that the MCTs bring, the most common community response refers to the learning opportunities that the school children enjoy. An inherent weakness exists in that the older members of the communities perceive the MCTs as not being for them, that computers are artefacts of the educated and of a knowledgeable lifestyle, which is precisely the opposite of the intention.

## 3.3 Opportunities

1. A demonstrator information system or "killer application" would now provide a catalyst to prove the concept of strategic ICT use in rural communities, building on the infrastructure and social awareness that is already in place. The project could focus its energies now on identifying and implementing such an application.

2. Recent research at Cornell University into the management of telecentres in developing countries can be used now to define the task of MCT management, as well as selecting and training individuals capable of taking up the post.

3. E-Commerce in local products has been suggested as a possible application. This could be developed in collaboration with a PANTLEG partner, Mr. Loyola Joseph, of the Foundation of Occupational Development (FOOD), Chennai, India. FOOD has extensive pioneering experience with e-commerce in native and rural products.

4. The future of the project poses many questions for which new knowledge is now required, especially relating to the development of rural communities within the Philippine and Mindanao contexts. Research partnerships, operated through local research institutions, can attract skilled researchers from both national and international sources to assist with the implementation of strategic applications for rural development through ICTs. In most cases where overseas researchers are involved, this can be at minimal cost to the project. The project offers a "social laboratory" into which researchers can "hit the ground running" with their enquiries. The project could define a research agenda that would address specific problems of rural development in the Philippines with ICTs and then cultivate a suitable network of researchers capable of addressing those problems.

5. The UN operates an effective system of IT volunteers that could be exploited to strengthen the human resources at all levels of the project, especially at community level (http://www.unites.org).

6. All MCTs in the project face much the same operating problems and some have already carried out cross-visits for the purpose of sharing and learning. This process should be strengthened through deliberate MCT networking using the infrastructures already in place. As a minimum, an email list should be established for MCT operators to exchange problems, solutions and learning opportunities.

7. As a member project of the PANTLEG initiative, networking contacts for mutual support and learning should be initiated between the Philippine MCT operators and those of the other PANTLEG centres in India, Malaysia and Mongolia. Eventually, this can lead to world-wide knowledge exchange among rural telecentres, from which the Philippine MCTs would benefit.

8. Capacity-building can now be focussed on the MCT operations; its strategic management, daily supervision and customer services. An MCT Operations Manual should be conceived that would specify the expectations placed upon MCT operators as well as the activities required to achieve them. Implementation of the manual should be regarded as a major capacity building exercise in view of the ambiguity in which various actors in the project now perceive the purpose of the MCTs.

9. Rural MCT projects shine a spotlight on a country's situation with regard to rural development; its management and its effectiveness, and the opportunities that become available as ICTs are diffused across previously under-served sections of society. The complexities of achieving ICT-induced rural development warrant special attention in any society where rural populations make up the majority, where ICTs have been identified as key contributors to national well-being and where the government is aware of the danger of a widening digital divide. As practical solutions to the problems of ICT-induced rural development are heavily situated within their contexts (what works in one village may not work in the next), the Philippine Government might consider a mechanism that will focus knowledge management activities dedicated to such problems within its existing advisory structures. A small and focused Rural ICT Institute or Research Centre would be capable of generating the new knowledge that is now required by rural communities in the Philippines to successfully embed ICTs into the fabric of their daily lives and to accelerate national momentum on the learning curve along which it is now advancing.

10. The communities in which the MCTs are located can now begin to build a Rural Development Portal on the internet (or off-line) that would capture their local knowledge and make it shareable among other rural communities.

11. A "Newsroom" could be established now to act as a hub to the existing MCTs in Mindanao. This would catalyse the creation and dissemination of local information, with the intention of infusing ICTs further into the fabric of daily life and of bringing about a shared approach to the development of a "killer application". The Newsroom would consist of a manager and a small team of professional internet-savvy operators who would scour the internet daily for information known to be of use to the rural communities in Mindanao, and which would be posted daily to a web site as the primary means of local information delivery to each MCT. The Newsroom would be housed in one of the existing MCTs. The model is based on the "value-addition centre" approach of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation rural information villages in Pondicherry, India, another PANTLEG project. Staff from the MCTs would be rotated through the Newsroom on a regular basis for the purpose of sharing local knowledge and for capacity building at the MCT level.

12. The project could now deploy one of a new breed of software packages that are rapidly coming onto the market, known as community web site software. Such packages facilitate the construction and development of community web sites where community members have the opportunity to contribute content and to interact with other members. Easy to use templates allow non-technical users to set up e-commerce facilities, exchange documents, construct bulletin boards, and post documents and photographs, among other things. An example is WebPOWER from HarvestRoad (http://www.harvestroad.com). Their promotion material suggests that

> *to overcome geographical barriers and communication issues, WebPOWER application software can empower communities of interest to create their own portals and encourage communication, interaction and dissemination of information. This enables communities - both geographic and interest-based - to work collaboratively, publishing up-to-date and valuable information from remote locations. The HarvestRoad Wizard is available for community members to create their own small web site and link it to their online directory listing. The easy-to-use WebPOWER application software empowers and encourages community members to contribute with up-to-date information; promoting information sharing and online communication.*

13. The absence of a powerful demonstrator, or "killer application", could be overcome by running a competition among the MCTs. It was noted that every MCT had a desire for more equipment. This could be exploited by offering extra equipment to the MCT/Community that implemented the information application that had the most beneficial effect on its community. All MCTs in the pilot would be required to participate. The Panel of judges could be drawn from among local and national dignitaries, so that adequate publicity could be attracted to the project. Each MCT would have a competition mentor assigned to it, possibly from DOST project staff, to ensure it was able to compete effectively. The winner would be awarded the new equipment.

14. One way of focussing the attention of the MCTs onto finding solutions for the problems of the host community is to organise the volunteers into teams, one for each community problem. A team of volunteers would address each community problem. Each volunteer could be on more than one team. Each team would have a team leader. Team leaders would be co-ordinated by the MCT manager, who is now a development operative. Custodial supervision of the MCT would be delegated to a volunteer supervisor. Volunteer teams of different communities that share problems could network their resources and work together for mutual benefit. Communities will become expert in marshalling resources to solve their own problems.

15. Volunteers could be asked to perform a quota of MCT community hours, in return for the training they receive. The hours could be worked, to some extent,

according to their own availability but within a fixed time period, so that they can co-ordinate their other activities with their duties for the MCT.

16. Senior citizens can be deployed as MCT operatives.

17. Given the positioning of the project in PCHRD, a health related killer application might be an appropriate choice for the powerful application that is now needed to galvanise rural communities towards strategic use of ICT.

18. Project activities will be accelerated by a streamlined mode of inter-departmental co-ordination. Given the potential impact of ICT-induced rural development in a heavily rural developing nation, as well as the challenges of multiple agency co-operation, it might be considered appropriate to lobby for a high-level authority, say, close to the ITECC. The special problems of rural ICTs receive scant attention in the Government Information Systems Plan.

19. The Open University appears to have the resources to offer online training in MCT management, treating it as a development-oriented role.

20. Discussions with the DOTC revealed some their plans for the Alternative Communication Programme (ACP), by which ultimately something like 1,500 municipalities will be provided with public facilities with a computer that will be connected to the internet. The private sector is expected to drive this programme, once government has designed the funding mechanism. It is expected that existing PCOs will be leased to private operators. It seems that the ACP does not directly target social development. If profits are made, the programme will be deemed successful, whereas if social development does not arise, it will not necessarily be deemed a failure. The MCT project is well placed to bring its experience to bear to influence the development of DOTC's thinking with regard to the imperative of ensuring that social development becomes a prime goal of a national communications programme. As this project has demonstrated, whilst technology is necessary, it is not sufficient for development to occur. DOTC are yet to be sensitised to the conditions under which their infrastructure can be operated to ensure that it induces social development, and this project has the capability to do that.

21. The project has accumulated a great deal of experience and has exposed significant learning opportunities. Project stakeholders and management are well advanced along what is a tortuous learning curve towards competence with ICT-induced rural development. It is now appropriate to record the experiences and to document and disseminate these lessons, not only for the benefit of the project stakeholders themselves, but also for the learning that other Philippine agencies, government and otherwise, will have to achieve in order to partner successfully with future programmes for a wider implementation. Additionally, the international development community has much to learn from the Philippine experience. Opportunities for dissemination include seminars, workshops and

reports in the media as well conferences and research publications. Elsewhere, it has been observed that video and television presentations can have a strong impact on policy makers and politicians with short time spans to grasp the essence of a project. Colleague/stakeholders in partner government agencies can benefit from the learning that is now available and so too can other government planners

22. In order to facilitate adoption of the MCTs as tools for community development, the project might consider engaging appropriate non-government organisations working for rural development as advisers or operators of the MCTs. Observations elsewhere suggest that the commitment and dedication of a well-motivated NGO serve well to exploit the slightest opportunity for advancing its aims. NGOs often focus sharply on results and exhibit the flexibility and dedication to make things happen where governments sometimes face difficulties. It is this element that seems to be lacking in the project so far, and smart partnerships could now be formed with suitable NGOs that are able to exploit mutual strengths whilst compensating for mutual weaknesses.

23. In order to increase the chances of success for a wider programme of rural ICTs, the government might consider an e-readiness investigation that will reveal the existing levels of technology awareness among the rural population and will suggest measures capable of elevating that awareness to levels that will ensure full use of ICTs. E-readiness investigations have been conducted to useful effect in a number of developing countries.

24. As a means of demonstrating many of the positive aspects of rural MCTs, especially those relating to inclusion, empowerment and development, a specific information-based programme could be launched to benefit the Lumad ethnic minority in Caraga Region, Mindanao, through the MCTs there.

## 3.4 Threats

1. The use of a government structure to foster a grass-roots movement carries a high risk of perpetuating a dependency syndrome among beneficiaries and of stifling the creativity and innovativeness that accompanies many successful rural ICT implementations.

2. The problems of co-ordinating the various agencies seem to divert considerable energy from the information and problem-solving aspects of MCT operations.

3. At Maguinda, the teachers appeared to be reluctant to accept computer training from their pupils who already knew how to use the computers. Some attitudinal development will be required to instil in the communities a "make-it-happen" syndrome capable of overcoming cultural barriers and behavioural impediments to optimal use of the technology.

4. So far, training for MCT volunteers has been tool specific, i.e. focused on the various application software packages, such as Microsoft Office and Internet Browsers. More effective training would be specific to the task of the role of the volunteer, once that has been adequately defined. Thus, volunteers would be trained how to use the various software packages for the purpose of community development. Training would be expanded to include topics like customer service, simple statistical analysis, communications and publicity.

5. Community aspirations for social development have not been ignited. Until they are, outcomes will remain sub-optimal.

6. The behavioural adjustments that are required for all ICT applications to achieve optimal outcomes have not yet occurred at the community level.

7. The absence of close co-ordination and co-operation between the key government agencies that are involved in the project suggests that a wider programme of rural ICT diffusion that might emerge from this pilot might suffer from the same deficiencies.

8. It is possible at this stage to characterise opposing perceptions of the project from the two major actors, the government and the rural communities. Project authorities in government perceive uppermost the developmental aspects of rural ICTs. Project beneficiaries in the communities perceive uppermost the technological aspects of the ICTs. These apparently opposing aspects of actor-perceptions need to be harmonised for genuine and sustainable development to occur.

## 4. Summary of Lessons Learned

This section summarises the lessons learned from the project so far.

1. Information provision for ICT-induced rural development should be firmly based on the needs and problems that communities have expressed, independent of any preconceptions that providers of the technology may have. Participatory processes can and should be used to understand the problems of communities and the information needs that will contribute towards their solution.

2. Rural communities may describe problems that are similar to each other's, but the social dynamics of communities will vary. It is these dynamics, more than the nature of the problems, which determine what information will be required and how it will be used to achieve social development.

3. Communities appropriate ICTs by following a process that begins with custodial adoption (concern for the environment for the technology) followed by surface adoption (management of basic functions and operations) followed by

assimilation (strategic use of ICTs for problem solving and social development). Support structures should acknowledge the different stages by adjusting their operations to correspond with each.

4. The sooner communities are exposed to the full potential that ICTs have for contributing to social development, the quicker will be their progress through the stages of technology appropriation.

5. Aspects of project implementation that sit on the critical path to desirable outcomes should receive special attention from project managers. Connectivity and the provision of information content, two items on the critical path in this project, are unlikely to be under the control of a single agency, so heavy emphasis is placed on the requirement for effective and responsive inter-agency collaboration.

6. In view of the evolving nature of project objectives, formal evaluations and assessments of progress should be incorporated into the design of rural ICT projects. There is often a long lead-time for communities to fully appropriate ICTs and projects need to verify that they are on right track to ensure that resources have been appropriately allocated.

7. Information providers should check that the information they provide is being used and how it is being used. They should modify their information generating processes in the light of this knowledge.

8. Whilst technology is necessary for ICT-induced social development, of itself it is not sufficient. Community aspirations have to be ignited early on and the capability of ICTs to solve genuine community problems has to be demonstrated.

9. The reliability of an internet connection to an MCT is more important than the bandwidth. Even at slow rates of data change users are able to build confidence and become accustomed to regular usage. Frequent interruptions to service erode communities' perceptions of the internet as an important component of daily life.

10. MCT usage statistics are a valuable source of knowledge about the contribution that the MCT is making to community life. Most significantly, the regular collection, categorisation and analysis of usage statistics cultivates reflection among the MCT staff as to how their activities are influencing the community. It is from such reflection that home-grown improvements are likely to be generated.

11. In the absence of specific and visible actions to include them, marginalised sections of communities are less likely to enjoy the benefits available from ICTs.

12. Pilot projects of this nature are valuable sources of learning for governments contemplating a programme of ICT-based rural development.

13. Project objectives for rural ICT implementations can evolve as projects advance. Management structures need to be flexible and adaptive to changing circumstances. Evaluations should accommodate such adaptations.

14. Community ambitions need to be ignited and their expectations elevated in order to generate aspirations towards strategic uses of ICTs that are capable of producing improvements in livelihood and well being. An intermediary may be required to achieve this, perhaps one or more NGOs or a Newsroom such as that suggested here.

15. Rural ICT projects should establish success indicators that focus directly on desirable outcomes that relate to social development. Often, projects target outcomes that are actually intermediary or facilitating, such as technology installation, training, awareness cultivation, etc.

16. Due to the experimental nature of many rural ICT implementations, stakeholders and other participants need to be enthused with the overall aims of the project so that they take responsibility for achieving outcomes rather than respond to a duty for performing specified activities. The challenges of pioneering ICTs in rural communities demand flexible approaches with regular periods of reflection and adaptation.

17. If you ask a community what are their problems, the answers you receive give an immediate indication of what ICTs should be used for.

18. Activities that lead to community-based social development are wrapped up in the dynamics of the communities themselves. They can be triggered by external influences such as ICTs but they cannot be force-fed.

19. Training for MCT operatives should be task specific rather than tool specific. Community members should be encouraged to conduct training. Training should take place right before the skills are expected to be used.

20. MCTs should have managers who see their role as development officers as opposed to custodians of the technology.

## Appendices

### Schedule of visits and interviews

| Date | Location | People |
|---|---|---|
| 4th June 2001 | Butuan | Ric Varela, DOST |
| | | Lyndo Villacorta, DOST |
| | | Nestor Bongato, DOTC, TelOf |
| | Jaliobong | Barangay council, MCT volunteers and community members |
| 5th June 2001 | Maguinda | Barangay council, MCT volunteers and community members |
| | Butuan | Angelito C. Alolod, Regional Director, DOST |
| 7th June 2001 | Malingao | Barangay council, MCT volunteers and community members |
| | Iligan, | Jasmin Esparante, teaching staff, C.M Gillera, School Director; Philippine Science High School |
| 8th June 2001 | Taguitic | Barangay council, MCT volunteers and community members |
| | Iligan | Vice-Chancellor Research, Vice-Chancellor Academic and Head of Computer Centre, Mindanao State University, Iligan Institute of Technology |
| 11th June 2001 | Manila | Denis F. Villorente, Advanced Science and Technology Institute. |
| | | Agustin R. Bengzon, Under-secretary for Communications, Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) |
| 13th June 2001 | Manila | Dr. Pacita L. Zara, Executive Director, PCHRD, DOST |
| | | Dr. Roderico H. Ofrin, Vice Chancellor for Research and Development, Open University |
| 14th June 2001 | Manila | Dr. Delia Torrijos. |
| | | Dr. Estrella Alabastro, Secretary, DOST. |

# Philippines 1<sup>st</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> June 2001

## Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June

Dinner with Merle: problems with
- connectivity;
- outreach to community;
- lack of conviction in project officers

## Monday 4<sup>th</sup> June

Meet other members of the party at airport, Nestor Bongatao (Bogs) Telecom Team Supervisor, TelOf, DOTC.  Arrive Butuan, stay at Inland Resort.  Meet with Ric and Lyndo Villacorto, Chief, Technical Services, DOST Caraga Region

Telecom budgeting is centralised in Manila – "imperial Manila".

2:00 pm. depart for Jaliobong MCT, Kitcharao, Agusan del Norte.
All the talk so far is about who works where, sorting out the responsibilities.

- No payphones in the villages along the way.
- A few  private lines to individual homes, plus to govt. offices.
- Told it takes 2 days to get a fixed line.
- Cellular phones are available in Butuan, there are several telcos.
- Bogs has a local rep, a technical guy, who seems to spread thinly across the district and who is required to repesent the DOTC's interests.

**Jaliobong**

Arrive Jaliobong 3:40 pm.
Meet with the captain and volunteers:
- They are constructing a new building to house the MCT, which is currently in the village hall. They provide labour and land and obtain materials from their the provincial government.
- Problems with PCO operation, the Barangay complained to DOTC about the performance of the operator.  They want to occupy the PCO.  DOST is considering that Barangay should control the PCO.   There are 3 options under study how to achieve this.  Should have been done sooner, shows lack of integration of ICTs and the community and an overly centralised model of comms provision.

Jaliobong has an internet connection at 33.6 kbits

My questions to the MCT committee and volunteers:

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**Comments and observations column:**

- Using a govt. structure to foster a grass-roots movement
- The model is one of information push, like an electronic library.
- Baragays were chosen for convenience of connectivity, but only 2 out of 4 are connected at the time of the review
- Doesn't seem to have been sold to the community members.
- MCTs need a killer application as a catalyst and to prove the concept.
- Current users are the schools and the Barangay administration.

- The problems of co-ordinating the various agencies seems to divert considerable energy from the  MCT operations.

- What is the role of the operators?
- What is the purpose of the MCT?
- Why are they constructing a new MCT?
- Who is in charge of the MCT?
- How are the MCT services promoted to the community?
- How are they promoted to the peripheral Barangays?
- What management training has been received by the person who is in charge?
- Who are the users?
- How do they use the MCT?
- How does the MCT benefit the community?
- What are the problems of the community?

**Story:** How did this project get started?
The idea was introduced to the govt. by Dr. Delia Torrijos of UNESCO, at the time, now with the ADB.

Merle believes CIDA is looking for a tangible return on investment from their funding, but telco problems have slowed them down.

Recent visits:
- Tony Zeiton, Hubert Simond, CIDA Feb 2000
- Les Breiner, Zbig, 2000
- Renald, 2000
- Zbig, Stephen (IDRC) Marcie(?) Umals, CIDA, Feb 2001

# Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> June

0900: arrive Maguinda

**Maguinda**

Same questions:
- Dodong is the president of the Youth Volunteers
- Sonia is one of the volunteers
- The purpose of the MCT is for the students
- The volunteers (12 of them) learn computing and help the community.
- MCT management is by the Youth President and the council
- MCT is open to all including neighbouring barangays for email
- Main users are students, use CD ROMs eg encyclopaedia, and go online for CNN weather and newspaper. Also do email.
- Have distributed cards to promote the MCT plus bulletin notices in 3 places – they are confident to be able to promote
- The connection is unstable.
- Volunteers have been trained and users in the community and the council members.

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Box 1:
- The MCT should be addressing the problems of the community.
- This community is not empowered.
- They don't fully appreciate the purpose of the MCT.
- The beneficiaries are the school children and the Barangay administration.
- The MCT is being organised to benefit those already with privilege and power.
- MCT services are not being targeted at the poorest sections of the community.

Box 2:
- MCT Management Training – manual by Raul Roman/Roy Colle at Cornell
- Possible link with Loyola for e-commerce
- Advertise for researchers to visit
- UN volunteers
- Networking of MCTs with PANTLEG MCTs
- Standards for MCT operation as a possible PANTLEG outcome (new project)
- Rural Telecentre Institute
- Rural Telecentre mail list
- The MCTs are not networking with each other
- Rural Development Portal can be started now, with MCTs contributing.
- Community web site software.

- The volunteers have cross-visited with other MCT. Also they email and phone. Contacts with other MCTs are about once per month.
- Community has framng problems but the farmers do not come to the MCT they use the volunteers. Have obtain information from CD ROM on pest control and duck rearing, for medicines. Info from the Visayan Agricultural Institute.
- Teacher uses computers to prepare reports of the studebt progress, the volunteers also do typing.
- Community problems:
- Rice farming , cassava planting.
- Volunteers: Sonia; suversosa@yahoo.com
- Teacher: Regina A. Andaya, Maguinda National High School, Maguinda, Butuan.

> - There is a DOST contract system that could be used to engage NGOs in rural development with ICTs.
> - Although given the tools to empower themselves, there is still evidence of a dependency syndrome in both Jaliobong and in Maguinda

**2:00 pm DOST Director, Angelito C. Alodod**

Relationship to the project:
- Provides administration support through local officials, the Regional Development Council
- Expects to connect all Barangays
- Wants to pilot satellite connection to islands
- The role put programme would be an inter-agency project
- Govt. expects communication for education and livelihood activities
- Purpose of the MCTs:
  - Livelihood
  - Literacy
  - Social interaction
  - Agro-based activities, e.g. pottery, ethnic food processing
- Main activity for Mindanao is food processing, furniture, fishing, e.g. Mindanao Fishing Online and Caraga network, plus web sites for political representatives.
- Looking for an IT boat for the islands
- He is Chairman of the Regional development Committee
- Wants IDRC support for post processing activities, harvesting products and water resources, e.g. Lake Mayan Hydro., and more MCTs.
- E.g. special MCT for indigenous peo0ple – LUMAD (?)
- There are 17 distinct tribes
- Could have a model satellite set-up in one of the islands
- MCTs good for teachers
- Govt is strong behind ICTs, esp. DOST, who will be hosting govt web sites and co-ordinating other departments for ICT implementation

**Dinner**
The Dean of the local college who is organising training for MCT volunteers is a bit doubtful on training for internet searching, - serach engines, search strategies etc. Seems the approach is to depend on a team of country experts organised on a web site to field questions from MCTs, as opposes to seraching the web for other information sources. Seems the MCT users won't understand what they get back from the web unless it is transposed/translated as into a format they can understand/use.

## Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June

Travel to Region 12, destination Iligan, via Cagayan de Oro. Whole day travelling along the northern Mindanao coast. Many barangays, evenly distributed along the coast with few roads leading inland. All fishing communities few attractive beaches, mostly black sand and rocky coast with low tidal range.

Raul Roman, a master's student at Cornell has been working under xxxxxxx on training requirements of Telecentre Managers. We provided data for his research from Malaysia. He should have his training manual out by now. Try and get a copy for this project.

Discussions and thoughts along the way:
- The problem with connections has been created by a dispute between TelOf and Mayatel, a local Telco. TelOf wouldn't pay a legacy bill to Mayatel that they inherited from a previous operator. TelOf kept some of their equipment on Mayatel premises and they held it hostage until the bill was paid. The influence of the project finally pressured a solution and connection is expected this week. The dispute kept the Public Call Offices in the entire district off the air for 2 years.
- The Mindnao State University, Iligan Institute of Technology, has been helping with training and can be a potential research partner.
- The project can start *now* to compile a directory of *international* resources into a portal for the MCTs.

At Maguinda, the teachers don't want to be taught by the volunteers but by DOST trainers. Need some attitude changes here to mobilise a "make it happen" temperament.

## Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> June

Arrive Malingnao 0830.

Met the Barangay captain, Teotimo Espra
Meeting in the Barangay session hall with volunteers, council and others.

Same questions: transcript of responses.

Management of the MCT is seen as a custodial role; security of the equipment and scheduling of the volunteers. Needs to be re-aligned to a role of community development (that happens to use ICTs).

- TelOf is rehabilitating the connection, which should be up in 5 days. 2 year delay due to dispute with Mayatel.
- Never had an internet link here.
- 3 volunteers are present, there are 45 in total. The rest are in school or in Manila.
- 2 Barangay officials.
- Training of volunteers took place last December.
- The volunteers don't seem to remember much of their training.
- It was done in MSU. IIT
- "The volunteers are here to learn the computer"
- Use the MCT to prepare Barangay reports.

- Susanette is here every day, the others come once a week.
- Susanette has email ***Susanette3@yahoo.com***
- Barangay seceretary is in charge, Willie Bartolomo, ***WillieBartolom2@yahho.com***
- The school principal is present
- Stated purpose of the MCT is for communication.
- Problems of the community:
  - Peace and order
  - Economic development
  - The low price of Copra
  - Unemploym,ent
  - Low pay
  - Drug abuse; *shabu.*
  - No doctor in the community
  - The clinic has no medicine.

Observations of the MCT:
  - Materials that are in English (most of them) present a problem.
  - No public phone, (coming in 2 months)
  - No publicity posters; they did have but not now
  - No newsletters, publicity flyers.

**Visit to Philippine Science High School (**Correct name?**)**
Located on the second floor of the stadium, which is still being built.  We had to pick our way through the construction.

Training of Volunteers, discussion with Jasmin Esperante, teacher.  E.jasmine@eudoramail.  (Only sees her e-mail at weekends when she goes home and uses the local intenet café.)

Volunteer training, included:
- Yahoo mail
- Internet surfing
- Word processing; what they use the most.
- MS Office
- Troubleshooting
- Internet and web page building, using Dream weaver and html coding
- Search engines; yahoo. Alta vista, ask.
- Volunteer gets 10 days training.
- The school computer lab has 1 PC per student, for 5 days training
- The MCTs have 1 PC per 10 students, for 2 days training
- At MSU (?) web page and internet training, 1 PC per 4 students for 3 days training.
- The volunteers "tend to forget the training"
- 50% of the volunteers went through the whole training
- Used the Office 2000 tutorials
- Volunteers don't get the chance to practice much.

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**Idea**
Run a competition among the MCTs for the best application that has a tangible impact on livelihood.  The winner gets more equipment (which they all seem to want).

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Training for MCT volunteers and managers should be *task* specific not *tool* specific.  The task is solving community problems.  The tools are the hardware and software.

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**MCT Management.**
First they should decide to have a manager.  Then they should decide what the role should be.  Then they should decide who should do it.  Then they should decide what and how to train him/her.

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**Idea**
Organize the volunteers into teams, one team per community problem.

- Next time, would do more practical, hands on with more PCs
- Purpose of the MCT?, allow the community to use computers, (not sure what for).
- Volunteers are trained "to get information about the barangay, advertise their barangay and use the internet to improve their economy."

**C.M Gillera, the School Director;**
- The barangay chose the volunteers, who may not be the most suitable people (not his problem)
- The school has an outreach programme that could be used as a volunteer post-training support resource, but they haven't built a web site for it yet.

> The project is important for governments who want to learn how to close the digital divide, and it's going to be governments who will do that on any significant scale.

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Project Problem: To design and implement a mechanism that will achieve MCT *implementation* that goes beyond mere *installation*.

Maybe the problem/Volunteer team matrix:

| Community Problem | Volunteer Teams |
|---|---|
| Peace and order | |
| Economic development | |
| The low price of Copra | Assign volunteers to teams to address each community problem. Each volunteer can be on more than one team if necessary. Each team should have several volunteers. |
| Unemployment | |
| Drug abuse; *shabu.* | |
| No doctor in the community | |
| The clinic has no medicine | *They are the experts in their own problems* |
| Low pay | |

The volunteer teams would have a team leader and would report to the MCT Manager who is now a community development operative. Custodial duties concerning the MCT, ie. Security and duty rostering can be delegated if necessary to another volunteer.

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Emerging impression:
The project is a microcosm Of ICT introduction into a developing country, typified by technology installation followed by sub-optimal benefits, (with disappointment and disillusion to come, accompanied by confusion and lack of understanding as to why the expected benefits did not emerge). Same problem as a good many corporations. Reason usually the failure to address the strategic use of the technology (in this case solving community problems) and the associated behavioural adjustments and cultural adaptations that will be required).

Do the communities feel they have *"right to ask"* (as Patch suggested).

Do they feel that *empowerment* is a legitimate aspiration for them?

The strategic applications are the community problems.

The behavioural adjustments that are required involve embracing the technology.

The cultural adaptations that are needed concern the *right to ask.*

Friday 8th June

0900 arrive Taguitic

- MCT opened March 2000
- No internet connection
- 6 volunteers present, 15 in total
- The volunteers have been trained
- Cherry, one of the (more vocal) volunteers says the MCT is important for school assignments
- The Barangay council is in charge, they delegated MCT control to one of their members, but he's a policeman and is only arounf once a week, Mr. Narciso Mapa
- **Cherry Dillau (che5201@yahoo.com)** is in charge when he's away.
- MCT usage:
    - The community harvests crabs, the use the fax to find out the status of their crab shipments.
    - Preparation of summons, judicial documents
    - Programmes for events, reduces transportation needs to go the nearest town for printing.
    - Helped Archy (another volunteer) to learn the computer for school
    - Printing of wedding invitations by a mother whose daughter was getting married.
    - Students prepare papers
- Community problems
    - Low fishing yields (despite setting up a sanctuary)

> The volunteers tend to disappear after their training without actually working in the MCT. Get them to commit to a certain number of hours community service in the MCT in return for the training. The hours can be working off in their own time (or, say, within a year. Post a public notice that show who has worked off their hours.

> **Idea**:
> Programme of IT Literacy for senior citizens, to become MCT volunteers and for a self-help initiative.

> How to strengthen the ability of an MCT to serve its role as a community problem solver?
> Possible solution; facilitate a mutual support resource via a networking arrangement at (at least) two levels:
> - The Mindanao MCTs themselves
> - All PANTLEG telecentres.
> - Support agencies in the Philippines

- 
    - Unemployment
    - Low farming yields
    - Drug abuse
    - Women's livelihood
    - Out of school youth
    - Inability to get children's education
    - Senior citizens cannot work.
- Cherry's story (see transcript).

Depart Taguitic 14:30 to Iligan

> Examples of community commitment:
> - Malingao provided an air conditioner for the MCT
> - Jaliobong is building a new building for the MCT.

Travelled with Rosello C. Mavansantos (Noy), Executive Director, SOPREX, Southern Philippoines Research and Extensi0on Foundation. Inc. A branch of MSUIIT. Provides training and has developed a Barangay Justice Services System to facilittae better access to justice procedures for barangay residents, for the settlement of local disputes.

1700 arrive MSUIIT – Mindanao State University; Ilegan Institute of Technology.
Met with Vice Chancellor for Research, VC Academic and Director Computer Centre.

See transcript of discussions.

They are quite interested to conduct research on the implementation and impacts of the MCTs in Mindanao, especially in Caraga Region and with indigenous people.

## Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June

Morning in the market in Iligan, then travel by car to Cagayan de Oro for flight to Manila.

## Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June

Manila

## Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June

0930 Visit ASTI, Advanced Science and Technology Institute
Denis Villorante
- Conducting reaerch projhects for rural communications
- Setting up a nationwide backbone for internet – PREGINET Philippine Research, Education and Government Information Network
- Regional access points as the network backbone
- For research by universities
- Expecting technology research for distance learning, telemedicien, videoconferencinmg
- Provide wireless connections, microwave and spread spectru – IEEE802.11,, co-locate with TelOf
- Want to give MCTs access to backbone, but not sure what would required to make the connection, suggest dial-up or radio, but P50,000 foir an antenna, and modem to give 10kms range for one line at 64kbs.
- Part of national policy for ICTs and HR development
- Expect complete 2004.
- Have connection to Phil. Satellite.  VSAT costs P2million (US$40,000) plus access

**11:15 Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC)**
**Under-secretary for Communications, Agustin R. Bengzon:**

- His Dept. can move faster, he needs to know about any bottlenecks, "straightaway"
- "Minda" (Erminda Dionisio-Ora, Programme Facilitator and Project Development Officer) is the contact.
- IN jaliobong, TelOf is negotiating with Mayatel on the "hostage" situation
- He wants regular reports
- Only 2 of the 4 MCTs are running with internet connection
- There are 1,525 municipalities in Philippines
- 672 Public Call Offices run by DOTC that they want to upgrade to MCTs, with computer, fax, modem and scanner
- Reckons US$2,000 per PCO, with the private sector doing it.

> Separate government departments are not co-ordinating effectively towards achieving rural connectivity that will have a strong chance of inducing development.

- 281 municipalities don't have Pcos now
- Plus there are 800+ private PCOs
- The difference bewteen a PCO that make smoney and one that doesn't is management.
- 3 year period to privatise MPCOs into MCTs.
- Govt. agencoies will provide content.
- Successful MCTs will be replicas of successful PCIOs.
- First DOTC will lease the PCO premises then fully privatise them.
- Alternative Communication Programme (ACP)
- Still under concept development – cabinet presentation next week
- Will provide incentives for access provision by private sector.
- For 34,900 Barangays
- Barangays organised in clusters, a pay phone per cluster = 9,500 pay phones in a clusters that within 30 minutes walking from anywhere
- Will be profitable within 3-4 years.
- Arranging overseas funding at low cost to private sector start-ups.
- Interested in a Universal Access Fund arrangement
- Interested in a franchise model of MCT organisation
- The Govt. is considering pulling ICTs into on department
- Agree need capacity building in MCT management – as development agents.

Lunch meeting and afternoon discussion with Minda (Erminda Dionisio-Ora)
- Preparing cabinet presentation, wants some ideas to sell the ACP concept
- Discussed models of information delivery to MCTs:
  - "Hub-and-spoke" which they seem to be pursuing – govt. providers to MCT recipients.
  - "Network; farmer-to-farmer" with govt. information provision but also MCTs providing information in a mutually supportive development network.
  - Minda wanted a draft terms of reference from me for the technical assistance that they had been told to acquire for setting up the development-oriented aspects of the ACP.


# Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June

A public holiday – Independence Day.  No interviews; writing notes.


# Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> June

Dr. Pacita L. Zara Executive Director, Philippine Council for Health Research and Development, (PCHRD), DOST.

- The purpose of the project is to develop Mindanao
- Lessons learned so far are include an understanding of the community willingness to participate, the MCT as a means for development and the need for and understanding of the role of other government agencies.
- The biggest challenge has been to co-ordinate the other government agencies.
- Community participation means involving the barangay council and the community in setting up and using the facilities.
- The problems have been in selecting people to take charge, choosing volunteers, but one of the strength of the regional offices is that they know the communities.
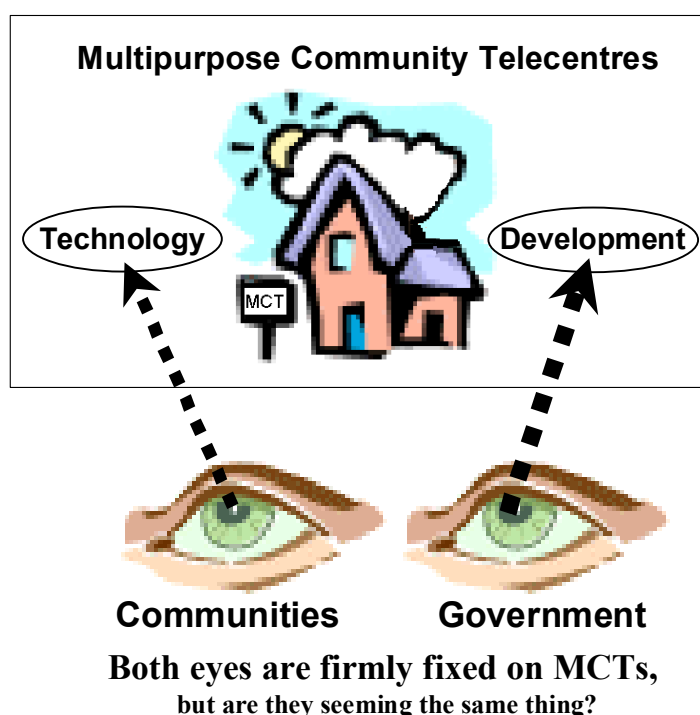
- The end of the pilot is when we have an income strategy for MCTs, and an exit strategy for PCHRD, this will include obtaining funds from the National Economic Development Council (NEDA) for a national strategy on MCTs.
- Previous DOTC project to deliver telephones for all barangays fizzled out.  Therefore they are pushing the ACP, but social development should go hand in hand with the technology delivery.
- Success indicators for this project: political will, usage of facilities, trained personnel.
- Impact on rural communities expected to be the desire to generate income, strengthening development skills and providing their own content.
- Just started identifying government content providers – subject experts.  Good response so far from multi-agencies.  PCHRD has influence in health and Agriculture as well as a grant mechanism to provide seed money for information delivery.
- Not sure MCTs will be self-sufficient, may need more support.
- The different models referred to in the proposal are the four different sites.  Actually the same model but different operations in each.
- Primary output = model of operation, along with community aspects.
- MCT Manager.  Difficult to identify, but barangay Captain, usually assigns a person, plus one volunteer.  OK to be fluid organisation until the spin-off to a separate economic enterprise.
- Annual evaluation of performance indicators; IDRC visits, but no other formal evaluation.  Will do one.
- Lessons from multi-sectoral – government led is the way to start, but then pass on to private operators.  If do again, maybe mix models of operation, with eg. NGOs.  Considering NGOs, can help them get started.  Cabinet members can be helpful here, there are several levels of co-ordination.
- Biggest organisation problem in rolling out the programme is to build a strong base in the barangay.
- Natural leader of a national programme depends on the point of entry, may be health or Agriculture.

> As the project is already under PCHRD, why not a health-related application as the "killer application" that will demonstrate the full value of an MCT.  But it MUST result in major health improvements.

> Inter-departmental co-ordination has to be streamlined.

> Rural Development with ICTs deserves "flagship" status, with its own organizational unit/dept/council – whatever.

> Information delivery and sharing will be better facilitated by a network approach than by the seemingly adopted hub-and-spoke approach.

**Multipurpose Community Telecentres**

**Technology**     **Development**

MCT

**Communities     Government**

**Both eyes are firmly fixed on MCTs,**
**but are they seeming the same thing?**

**4:00 pm. Dr. Roderico H. Ofrin, Vice Chancellor for Research and Development, Open University of the Philippines**

- Previously at the National Telehealth Centre, co-ordinating with the MCTs
- Developinghealth content throuhg a health portal, for simple heqalth messages; first aid and wound care.
- Suggest communities to develop their own content.
- Major health problems in schistsomaisis (sp)- skin parasite, leads to liver and lung problems. The specialists are in Manila, nowhere else.
- Assisted refereal can work, whereby the patient is referred to a suitable nearby doctor or clinic after exchanhging information over the internet.
- There are occupational hazards in rural areas; plantation pesticides, heavy metal poisoning in mines, TB is nationwide
- Govt. has a strong polio programme
- Also STDs
- Rural health Centres have a community health worker, midwife and a visiting physician.
- Current community health care programme for diagnosis and treatment and health worker training.
- Provididng on-line training for health reesrach, e-commerec for SMEs, Filipinayana (culture), and caring special children.

> Health applications can become strategic for rural MCTs.

> Open University could provide on-line training for MCT managers.

# Thursday 13th June

0900 Dr. Delia Torrijos, retired development advisor, ADB and PCHRD.
dtorrij@pacific.net.ph

- How did MCTs get started in Philippines? – with literacy and education programme.
- DOST as implementer not 100% but best chance as Science and Technology is a-political.
- Not 100% staisfied with the project, wants faster implementation
- Involve local government and key people in government
- Needs a powerful demonstration programme.
- MCT is a place of hope
- The problem is lack of access to services
- Requires empowerment, which is the knowledge of where to get the right information. And an understanding of what information can do for them, plus someone they can approach.
- People need to know IT is just a tool.
- They need motivation. What we consider self-explanatory is not to them.
- They need to prepare for the changes that are going on around them.
- EG. As an illustration to them- their sources of firewood get further and further away, this cannot be stopped. Also there are no more animals to hunt, how will they adapt to these changing conditions?
- How to achieve motivation? Provide information flow to rural areas – activate all the actors and the telecommunications provider: Arrange a powerful demonstrator project. People don't

> As the project originates in DOST, it takes on a technological emphasis right from the start. Is this project really about technology?

have much interaction other than with themselves, they need a different concept of life other than day-to-day survival.

- Any ideas for a killer application? – Improve on what they are doing already – do it quicker.
- How to build uinto the project? – 2 level project management; national and community. National provides the information conduit and community provides the management team.
- He beginnings are there, but it needs to be institutionalised – an executive order will do that.
- EG. Is HERDIN (health info project)
- Use professional organisations for training.
- Feedback to funding agents that they should be impatient, the social preparation takes time
- If communities are not prepared properly, the project will only feed the elite.
- Donor programmes sometimes don't match country needs, but this isn't a case of that.
- Location of the programme in the govt. structure is important, the mandate cannot be questioned
- Should apply both govt.-to-farmer and farmer-to-farmer

> Effective project management is in control of all activities that are on the critical path to success. This has not been the case in this project insofar as the following critisl factors:
> - connectivity, and
> - content
> the provision of which is subject to other agencies.

## 10:30. Dr. Estrella Alabastro Secretary Department of Science and Technology

Interview transcript

- Requires a good write up of the project to show colleagues.
- Needs initiatives for the Muslims
- Private sector should participate, especially in providing the infrastructure.
- Cannot ensure information push
- There is the GISP from the ITECC
- Role out of the NEDA and ITECC will give the go ahead for wider programme, involving all agencies.
- ITTEC is the mechanism for getting agencies to provide information.
- President is emphasising ICTs, is the chair of ITTEC
- External assistance dramatises the importance of the programme.
- Considering spinning–off the programme to regions to work with local organisations/NGOs.

# Pilot Multipurpose Community Telecentres in Selected Barangays in the Philippines

**PCHRD**

A project by the Philippine Council for Health and Research Development (PCHRD) of the Department of Science and Technology

for the

**IDRC**

by
Roger Harris

## Interviews

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# Pilot Multipurpose Community Telecentres in Selected Barangays in the Philippines

A project by the Philippine Council for Health and Research Development (PCHRD) of the Department of Science and Technology

An evaluation and reporting on the implementation process and results of the Multipurpose Community Telecentres Project in Northern Mindanao.

## Interview Transcipts

### Jaliobong MCT

Merle
The captain has been elected as the mayor and it is good as it will facilitate your transaction with the town.  More local transactions than with the rest of the country.  Because of the MCT, The team of volunteers got to know each other.  Before you were going on line individually not as a community.  After a discussion with DOTC TelOf, you used your own initiative, and complained about the TelOf operator, and made a resolution with a complaint.  We want to with experiment how a PCO can be operated by a local community, so Bogs will share what DOTC is suggesting.

Bogs
Regarding your  concern of the PCO performance.  Your resolution has reached the central office.  Our secretary has forwarded complaint to the assistant secretary, who forwarded it to the legal office, but they are not in the know-how of the background, so the regional office is conducting an investigation.  The Admin charges are being bought against Mr. Baslof.  Telof never tolerate such kind of employees, but we don't get feedback, so lucky the council reported him.  Appropriate action will be taken against him.  Your dial tone comes from Butuan city, via several repeaters, even have very good tech staff, but he has limited resource for maintenance, lack spare parts, also he's busy elsewhere, in other areas/regions. Caraga are lucky to have Mr. Roger xxxxxx, he is good but one man team.  In spite of problems we will try our best to operate and maintain the system.

Harris
My first question is why are you building a new centre?

Merle (translating)
The present building is too small for them, so they asked for 200,000 pesos and this was approved by the provincial government.

Harris
Would the MCT also include the PCO if they took that over?

Merle (translating)
This building is used for the business of the local govt. here. They have a big plan for the telecentre, the library and they also want it to be a training centre.

Harris
There are several operators/volunteers here; can they explain what is their role?

Merle (translating)
The volunteers come here especially to respond to the requests of the community,

whether for encoding typing, for printing of invitations, birthdays, preparation of special programmes for special events. Those were the main requests of the community, pending the realisation of the connectivity. Also some of the volunteers come here even if it is not their duty days because they provide backup to the volunteers who can't come in their schedule. If there is a mobile computer in the schools for the students and teachers to learn the vols. assist as trainers.

Harris
Who is in charge of the telecentre?

Community member
Actually, we have a schedule for our volunteers, and for me the answer to the question actually I'm a volunteer here and also a Barangay council member, I try my best to work with everything from relation from the council to the MCT (?) and do whatever will be related to the council, that is my role as the PIO for MCT. And also as Public Information Officer of the MCT, I have done my best for the students, that is very important and we try our best to keep good relations with the High School, …, they want to learn. Without the volunteers, that relation will be …?

Harris
Are you in charge?

Community member
We have a schedule… we discover that they can come here in whatever time they have…we try our best that everything, including communications, will be included, because I have done it, and … including the registration…but if it is done by others we also have the typewriter, so that is our role, including the scheduling, ..

Merle
The MCT right now is placed under the Barangay council. And the barangay council have delegated to the volunteers to organise themselves into a team with a leader and a public information officer who is also the barangay treasurer so she establishes a relation ship with the barangay council and the volunteers,

Harris
So who is the leader?

Merle
The leader is Anna-Marie.

Harris
Maybe we could hear from Anna-Marie as the leader, what's your role? (laughter). How is it different from being a volunteer?

Anna-Marie
Address the meeting, before we do everything, …sometimes we settle differences, actually I have not……

Harris
Who actually uses the services of the centre? I have some data here, this is beautiful, but when I started reading it, I wrote "summarise" at the bottom, so just as a suggestion it might help if you can summarise the usage of the centre into maybe 3 or 4 categories, then you can categorise the usage, otherwise it's difficult so go through month by month to find out who is using it. You have to start with this,..?

Merle (translating)
Actually the facility will help the farmer like for example mango farmers in this place to know what kind of .. also support the use of chemicals so we can have directly to manila, we just use the internet email to send for asking for information, and also for other

information.  We can also ask questions to those universities, it's the best way to get fast and accurate in formation.

Harris
So who is going to do that and when are they going to do it?

Merle (translating)
One of the applications we are under consultation is about farming and how they can connect to people at ..,about agriculture, for example, ….  They could get an interactive newsletter here and there could also be experts in agriculture or animal husbandry where they place their email address so people here can interact with the experts from the college. Its just one application we are doing with central agriculture and other issues, but the other applications we 're working up now is on the weather information ….

Harris
Is there somebody here who can describe that to us?

Merle
No, right now, we are not ready but we're looking at the terms of reference, how the system will be done by a contractor in consultation with …

Harris
Has anyone thought it might be possible right now to get some information through the internet that could help with their farming activities?

Merle (translating)
There was before a query on black bugs which are affecting the rice. So they tried to search the internet for those information. I think that they were able to locate the information but they would need a technician in agriculture to sift through the info and be able to cull out what is useful for the farmers and to spell it out in a simple summary for the farmers.  I think this is the gap that has to be addressed, and what we are doing with the expert newsletter is to be able to fill in the gap and train these volunteers to create a simple system as a start in addition to our thinking about a separate agriculture information system.

Harris
I can see this is a farming community and Jaliobong looks beautiful, but you have problems.  Every community has problems.  Other than the black bugs, what are your other big problems?

Community member
Unemployment

Harris
OK.  Who is doing something, anything, to use the telecentre to solve the unemployment problem?

Community member
There was a time when they were asking the office of the Dept of Management (?) why the allotment for the barangay was delayed.  Many times we have emailed them, but there was no response.  The DTM has a web site, but there was no response.

Harris
What do you sell?  What do make here that you sell to outsiders?

Community member
Copra.  We have asked why the copra price is very low.  There was no answer yet. Because our main livelihood here is farming, copra and rice.

**Harris**
Do you know you can sell things on the internet?

**Community member**
We tried to ask the information, the reason behind it. There was no response.

**Merle**
They know they can sell but they don't know yet the process of doing it.

**Harris**
How do you think this telecentre is helping your community?

**Merle (translating)**
One of the benefits they derive from the telecentre is that people here need not go to Butuan for example to study computing and the internet. And transportation accommodation and fares there, they can do that here. And one of the plans that they have for the MCT building is they use the council here to run the telecentre.

**Harris**
Why do you think it's good to have knowledge about computers?

**Community member**
It is very good to have knowledge about computers because for us for teachers in doing the computation of the … and in the research for function of … and for the students, they want to learn how to manipulate the computer in preparation for their exams.

**Merle (translating)**
What he said is they are already on the information age and he felt that we were behind, but this opportunity provided them the learning they need in college, to get the hands on for the computing and the internet and again they don't have to go to the city, to the schools that offer courses for high tuition, they can do here right in the community. He mentioned about what Ric and xxx is starting like the conversation with the barangay where the experts at the university are at the disposal of the barangay to communicate with in terms of the xxxx in farming especially.

The prices of copra affect all our livelihoods. The main problem here in the barangay is the price and the salary or the wage.

**Harris**
Do you have to sell to one government agency?

**Community member**
No. There are private buyers.

**Harris**
Do you know what other barangays are being paid?

**Community member**
Not only in this district not in the whole country system

**Harris**
That is a prime candidate for using the communication facilities to get market information.

**Community member**
We don't have the capital to start that kind of movement. That is the problem in the barangay.

**Community member**

It's too late for us because before the copra is being productive it takes 5 years. So it's too late for us to divert to another kind of crop.

Community member
The health information we need is very different from the marketing information we need. We are open to the world itself, so what our problem is, whatever problems we have, economic whatever, this will help a lot to the community, and actually most of the neighbouring barangays including the municipality, are envious of us, they are praying we will teach the services to them so that also they will be clear about what they want to now.

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## Interview Transcipts

**Maguinda MCT**

**Harris**
Can I ask about the volunteers as we have several here.  Sonia, what do you think is the role of the volunteers?  Could you describe your job to me?

**Sonia**
It can help a lot to xxx we can know how to use the computer and how to manage xx , what are the parts, it can help us and through that our people in the community.  We are 12 volunteers.

**Harris**
Who is in charge of the telecentre?  Who is the boss?

**Volunteer**
We have the president of the youth council and the barangay council actually give the security so him so that this IT will not be lost or stolen, so we work hand in hand.

**Harris**
So Dodong is the guy in charge?  But you are a volunteer as well Dodong?  Did you have another job?

**Merle (translating)**
He is one of the volunteers, he is in charge of the telecentre overall and they have assigned one volunteer to xxxxx  the council says he is the natural leader as the telecentre in the youth hall.

**Harris**
So if somebody in the community wants to use the computers, can anybody come in?

**Merle (translating)**
It's open to everybody.

**Community member**
There are other barangays who come here to use the centre, to use the email

**Harris**
Can I send some email when we've finished?

**Community member**
Yes

**Harris**
Sonia, I know you collect the records of telecentre use. So, anybody, what is the main use of the telecentre? What is the most popular use for the computers?

**Merle (translating)**
The main users right now are students. When they are off line, they can use the information from the CD ROMS to study mathematics and other subjects.

**Harris**
And what about when they're on line?

**Merle (translating)**
The get information for the weather, and if they want the news they go the Philippine Enquirer web site. They also use Yahoo for email.

**Harris**
Do the volunteers advertise the telecentre to the community?

**Merle (translating)**
For the promotional part of the telecentre, the group is trying to have three notice sites where they can post information about the weather or the farming technology that will be important to the community so they start to have information about the high school and the elementary.

**Merle**
I would like to go back to what the Capitan said about the promotion because at that time they were not very keen on promoting widely because the internet telecom connection is not that stable. Right now the connection is stable already, so they are more ready to promote it.

**Harris**
Is any training conducted in the telecentre?

**Merle (translating)**
The volunteers are trained by Nic and Rico, and then last month you had training trainers in a combined programme with Jaliobong for training for trainers. For training of users in the community, they have trained high school students they will soon be training the barangay council.

**Harris**
Did the volunteers contact the other telecentres?

**Merle (translating)**
They communicate with each other and every so often they have email between Maguinda and Jaliobong.

**Harris**
How often by email do they communicate with each other? How regularly?

**Merle (translating)**
They would like to make it more frequent but Jaliobong site has poor connections. So even if they want to connect it is difficult.

**Harris**
How about contacts with government departments, government officers? Does that happen?

**Merle (translating)**
Before Gloria Macapagal became president, when she was vice-president, they emailed

her requesting for xxxxxxxx, but no response.

Harris
Capitan, this is a farming community. How much do you use the telecentre to help you farm?

Merle (translating)
He said all the farmers, they don't really come here to seek information but they pass their requests to the volunteers.

Harris
Can you give me an example?

Merle (translating)
Apart from the weather, they also ask information on raising techniques for ducks geese and goats.

Harris
Did that have any impact on the farming techniques used here?  Did anything change on the farms as a result of getting that information?

Merle (translating)
They used the information themselves as before they did not have back yard geese or ducks

Harris
So how did the information help you raise ducks?  What information did you get that you didn't have before?

Merle (translating)
The information was mostly about the health of ducks and the pests.

Harris
Which pests?

Merle (translating)
Duck cramps, and for the ducks, what they can eat.

Harris
Where did that information come from?

Merle (translating)
The information was from the CDs generated by the xxxxxx consortium.

Harris
So that wasn't off the internet?

Merle (translating)
The information came from the Visyas Agricultural Institute.

Harris
So have told any other farmers this information so they can also raise ducks?

Merle (translating)
We have disseminated this information to the community and all of them get the breeder ducks from Dodong.

Harris

Imagine I'm the Philippine government and I come here and say, "you can't have these computers any more, we are going to take them away, unless you tell me the one single best reason why they should stay here." What is the single best reason that these computers should stay here and the telecentres should continue?

Community member
This is a major reward for everybody, especially as we in Maguinda are one of the few people to have this kind of facility. Last year we have started the MCT policy with our students learning the basic skills about the computer and nowadays it is a part of the secondary course.

Harris
OK, thank you for that. So what you're saying in answer to my question is the most important use for the computers is to help the school pupils?

Community member
Yes sir.

Harris
Does anybody have anything else to add to that?

Community member
I would like to talk about my job as the head teacher. We have all the students of the Maguinda High School receive the training here, so can make our teaching body computer literate

Harris
What training do you require?

Community member
Basic training.

Harris
There's a computer. Have you tried it?

Community member
Not yet.

Harris
He knows how to use it (pointing at the head volunteer). He can show you.

Community member (teacher)
We are waiting for training.

Harris
You don't have to wait for 3 days training. He can use it, (pointing) she can use it; you have the skills, why not get together and learn? If you want to learn, you can do it this afternoon (laughing). Don't wait for the 3 days training.

Community member
The computer has made my work very light now, because I can come here and prepare my reports and make the communication because our work involves communication and reports.

Harris
What kind of reports?

Community member
The progress of the students, what is going on in all the school, what needs the

government can offer for the pupils in the high school.

Harris
How does the computer help you prepare those reports? How do you use the computer to prepare those reports?

Community member
The printing and the formal letter, by the volunteers.

Harris
Do you send the reports by email?

Community member
I have not tried, but I think they have internet connection, the Butuan officials.

Harris
Why do you think the students need to know about computers?

Community member
To do research

Harris
Why do you research?

Community member
To know more about the assignment

Harris
Let me ask the students, do computers help you get better marks for your assignments?

Students
Yes.

Harris
Do the computers help you do the assignments quicker? Or does it make it longer?

Students
Quicker.

Harris
We can see the students getting benefit. They get better marks and they use less time to get them. How about everybody else?

Merle (translating)
They really haven't time to promote it to the community because they were afraid that they will get some damage or they won't be able to repair it, but in the last month their eyes were opened to the fact that it's better to use it for their purposes without worrying about getting it damaged so that's one of the best reasons for the Philippine govt. not to pull out the computers because it has helped the farmers, like the duck farming.

Harris
We can see that the computers help with the students' problems. But what are the problems of the rest of the community? What are the problems of living in this barangay?

Merle (translating)
For rice farming, they are concerned with addressing the different pests that attack the rice. At the research centre they address the pests that attack the rice, and because of

that he saw an improvement in pest control.

Harris
So you are using the computers to help with the pest control?

Community member
We got the research from the different offices that research the pests.

Harris
Where did that information come from?

Community member
From the research.

Merle
From the CD ROM

Harris
Any other problems in Maguinda?

Merle (translating)
Other farming concerns such as hog raising.  They are developing at least hundred hectares here for cassava.  The corporation has guaranteed to take all the production

Harris
Make sure you get a good price.  You can find out the other prices by contacting the other buyers on the internet.

Merle
The programme is co-ordinated by the Visayas College, but you can get the price information.

Bogs
We cannot leave this equipment idle (the PCO) we have to make it operational to serve the people.  So right now we are planning and exploring the possibility of turning over the operations of the PCO to the local barangay.  Right now there is an ongoing study to let the people of Maguinda operate the PCO.  So will be just be having some revenue sharing.  For example for the 10pesos we earn, 3 pesos will go to Maguinda and  7 pesos will go to TelOf.  But right now the plan is still under study and I hope that the next time I come here it will be the property of Maguinda who will be operating the PCO.  And I just also want to tell the people of Maguinda that we from TelOf in partnership with DOST are in full support to the needs specially to communication and the IT needs of not only the people of Maguinda but to all the people who live in the remote places.  Rest assured that people of TelOf will be of help to Maguinda.    Income earning and distribution will mean that the DOST will not have to support them all the time because they will earn from the revenue sharing and from the sale of the phone cards.  Maybe later on we can explore the selling of the internet cards.

The dial tone that you are getting here is coming from Butuan.  So before it can reach Maguinda, it has to pass by several repeaters.  Now these repeaters, some are being powered by solar powered equipment, so the problem right now is some of the batteries that operate that equipment are not that good so it doesn't accept full charge from the solar panels.  So that the reason why when the weather is dark, it doesn't accept charges from the sun, but it starts operating when the sun is already in full blast.  Actually the system was designed to operate on a 24-hour basis.  Unfortunately the batteries is not that good right now.  Anyway, our local technician here has requested our central office for the replacement of those batteries.  Unfortunately, these batteries are not locally available. We have to import them from Singapore, from Japan, so that's why it will take time before we can avail of a replacement.

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## Interview Transcipts

**Angelito C. Alolod, DOST Regional Director**

Harris
How do you see your role in this project?

Alolod
Well I think the most important role I am playing is the administrative support, at least the overall co-ordination, with the local government officials, with the regional officials, especially the Regional Development Council.  Because as the policy-making body in the region and all projects involving very big money will pass to them for approvals.

Harris
Has that been problematic for you ?

Alolod
Well we have a very good relationship with everybody here.  In fact I have just talked to the newly elected officials and they were very supportive of the efforts for the project, especially with ICTs.  So we can really expand whatever programmes we have now on ICT

Harris
So is it likely that the regional offices might become involved independently of the project structure that you are already working in?

Alolod
Yes, we can collaborate and work as an independent partner .

Harris
Does the regional Development Council have any plans of its own for development of ICTs.

Alolod
Actually I am the chairman of the committee in charge of the ICT development for the region.  So more or less we can really recommend projects for inclusion into the overall programme of the region.

Harris
Have you been satisfied with the response from other government departments, because I know Merle has been busy co-ordinating a number of different agencies.

Alolod
Yes , our partnership with the other government agencies which are directly involved in

the project has very important.  In fact they have provided us not only manpower but some financial counterparts.

Harris
How do you see the project developing into the future?  What are your expectations?

Alolod
Well we would expect that all the Barangays in the region will be inter-connected. Because really some of them are so located in the far flung areas, and have no way of connecting themselves to the rest of even the region must less the rest of the community.

Harris
But I understand that not all barangays have telephones services .

Alolod
Yes, not all. That's why we are trying to look at the model we are in, it could be satellite based, and we're trying to start some pilot projects in the islands, in this region because they're so isolated and there's no really future for the telephone in the telephone connections for these communities.

Harris
So this particular project, there are four pilots and there are many thousands of barangays, so how do you see the project moving forward in the sense that it can create a structure capable of delivering or rolling pout this kind of programme to as you say all the barangays?

Alolod
Yes, that's why we started with the smallest unit or component of the organisation, the barangay.  I think it would be very for us to come up with at the higher level some structure that can transcend already the foundation .

Harris
How do you see that working?  Will be in the DOST ?

Alolod
Well I think it would be more of an inter-agency co-operation becuase we have all sorts of expertise in the other agencies, especially in terms of the training that should be necessary in the barangays.

Harris
IS that being discussed right now?

Alolod
Yes we have some inter-agency co-operation especially in manpower training.

Harris
But it's a massive programme isn't it?

Alolod
Well, we're implementing at our own level, but we're upgrading first the areas of science and maths education. So in co-operation with xxxx every summer we finance almost here we have 2,500 teacher trainees and for Caraga we have almost 220.  And this will go on for the next four years. And we also having the same kind of tie-up with the local government units, especially in livelihood skills development.  And we conduct training, on fish processing, food processing, vegetable processing,.

Harris
So what exactly does government expect from this programme for MCTs?

**Alolod**

I think foremost will be the communication facilities which would really generate a lot of after-benefits. Because it would enable the upgrading of education, perhaps it would lighten more our work with people and at the same time provide them with alternative livelihood activities.

**Harris**

Have you seen examples of these yet from the existing pilot projects? Are there examples that if you were talking to a minister or a senior official you could quote quite happily and say this is what we've achieved?

**Alolod**

We've been talking to before with the member sites and with the Director General of xxx. In fact before we had a plan that all the schools in Caraga would be interconnected . But I think that would be impossible because of the magnitude of the financial resources that we are going to need. But nevertheless, I think an offshoot to this, what we are doing now is another barangay opposite Maguinda now is putting up a Centre for Sustainable Development. So we are bringing in experts from MSU, from agro-forestry and ceramics production. Now the only constraints is they don't have any telephone connection so we could not possibly have the same project as we have in Maguinda. They are aware of this. They were requesting us if it is possible for us to install one for them. So I was telling them you should solve first your telephone connection before you we can do it for you.

**Harris**

Both Merle and I have seen similar projects elsewhere and they don't distinguish between development and ICTs. One is important to achieve the other. Something of what I'm observing within the structures here doesn't quite reflect that approach.

**Alolod**

They should be inter-related, absolutely. Because that's the only way for us to sustain even the ICT projects.

**Harris**

How do you se the role of an MCT?

**Alolod**

It will serve, definitely in terms of livelihood, literacy and closer interaction among the community. Because things are basic to the region and we found out that education really should be as a prime mover of development. And we are trying to do this now with our state indigenous people. We are now trying an integrated approach. Wherein they would learn livelihood and at the same time read and write.

**Harris**

I though literacy was already quite high?

**Alolod**

Here?

**Harris**

Yes

**Alolod**

Among the indigenous people it isn't very high.

**Harris**

Are you talking about computer literacy or reading and writing literacy?

Alolod
Reading and writing.

Harris
What kind of livelihood opportunities could be propagated to communities ?

Alolod
Well it's more of the agro-based livelihood activities, and I think we can also develop their own indigenous activities because in some areas they have already xxxxxx but it needs some improvement to introduction of machines and treatment that they can operate.  But there is also what we call the ethnic food processing, and we look at it as a prospect for export because one product which is known as xxxxxxxxxx is now being imported from the Philippines by Thailand  and Indonesia, so we have that here and we want that to be developed.

Harris
Is anybody working on these particular projects, and integrating the ICT with them?

Alolod
Yes we are now working on it actually, because what the regular programmes the agencies are implementing, we have the special programme known as the science and technology for Mindanao, and we have identified four priority areas which is marine fishery development, we are now into food processing, and xxxxxxxx culture and we can concentrate on high value products, and then we have the furniture industry.

Harris
So are there any specific actions that will integrate MCTs into these programmes?

Alolod
Yes, as you would know that we are also trying to develop the data bank for all of these, so we are into, in fact we have, we are supposed to be on-line now, the Mindanao fisheries on line, but now our server is down so we cannot access the information , se these are the things we are trying to do.  We world really like to integrate the ICT into the system because as it's one way to let our prospective buyers know what are our products in the region.  In fact we are suppose to have now the Caraga IS network. For the lawmakers, we have provided them a complete hardware and accessories.  We have designed for them web sites where they can put in their programme .  So it's a way of connecting agents to the people who are really affected by the agents' decision for the development of the region.

This is our mobile information technology classroom.  It goes around the region.

Harris
That's in a bus?

Alolod
Yes, in a bus.  It trains young students.  It has laptop computers.  33 students can be accommodated at one time. And we have so far reached about 38,000 of them for the last two years.

Harris
I'm trying to set up something similar in a boat in Sarawak.

Alolod
Yes, that's what I'm planning also for the islands here.  There are a lot of communities that are really isolated.  We are trying to get outside funding.  But we are starting first with our congressmen.

Harris

At regional level is the government representation for ICT through your department?

Alolod
Yes currently as the chairman of the information technology committee of the RDC (Regional development Committee), I wanted to shed the load to the DTI (Dept. of Trade and Industry) but the DTI doesn't want to take over the chairmanship. But anyway we have that agreement but we will still be the co-chair of that committee.

Harris
Is there anything you want to say about the IDRC and this project?

Alolod
Yes I think what we wanted to happen here with IDRC backup to develop further post-harvest facilities, especially on other commodities other than agriculture. As I say we have a lot of marine and fishery products, which really would add value if they can be processed properly. And then I think one other is to look into a GIS for our water resources. We have Agusan Marsh (?) which is almost 119 hectares. We have Lake Mainit, which you have seen. Lake Mainit is being converted into a hydo-electric facility. You have seen the mountains at the back. They will be boring tunnels through them, 3 kilometres long, and the water will go directly to the sea. It's approved by all the local governments around the area, its approved by the local people, but what we are trying to lessen now are the sediments that would somehow impact on the ecology of the area.

Harris
Any thing in particular related to ICTs and the IDRC?

Alolod
Could IDRC fund more projects for connecting barangays? A number of local officials are trying to expand the programme to other barangays. And would be possible to have a special one for the indigenous people? The Lumads. Because they have unique requirements. A very unique culture. So we wanted one special project for them. They are all over the place, nomadic. Agusan Del Sur is one of the provinces. We are not sure what kind of project will pass for funding by the IDRC. Could we set up a model for ICT for one of the islands, by satellite, because there are no telephone facilities or electricity. A satellite, solar powered facility? And also one more thing, we are now trying to set up the MCT as a training centre for teachers, especially in terms of upgrading the quality of instruction.

We can put on line the things they want to sell. We are trying to set up the e-commerce sites so when the orders come in they can get some income, to maintain the facilities. I think that can also be done with Maguinda and Jaliobong.

Harris
Do you think the commitment to rural development with ICTs is strong enough in government circles?

Alolod
Specially DOST, we are really into it. There are two major things we might concentrate later on, the (?) services for our laboratories, and the ICT facilities for networking, data banking, GIGS. The local government will be starting up on GIS in terms of the local political boundaries, but on that aspect we have been trying to look at the feasibility of having a team of experts that would benefit the people. Now incidentally, for the last two years we have more or less initiated the setting up of computer training centres and (3 centres). We have provide them initially with 10 computers then developed the trainers for this. And we can do that with the pilot MCTs, to help them generate income.

Harris
I'm interested to explore a little bit how to roll out the pilot programme to a full-blown implementation and is that likely to stay under the DOST, to the best of your knowledge?

**Alolod**

Yes I think it will be best if it is under DOST. But at the same time it should be institutionalised in the region.

**Harris**

Do you see any advantage in engaging with NGOs?

**Alolod**

It would depend on the kind of co-ordination that would be necessary. Because if you look at the sustainability of the project, I think government agencies should be involved but if you would look at the more human side, lets say the overall co-ordination, I think it would be good for the project . If you look at what we're doing here, some of the projects are private based, some are government based and some are local government unit based.

**Harris**

Do you think are NGOs in Mindanao who could merge with your programme and bring the grass-roots community more closely into the project?

**Alolod**

Yes. We are now working with one the NGOs and I think it's very effective. The project has been there for the last two years and it still operating and they are the one directly involved with recruitment, in the identification and dissemination of the information to the Lumads.

**Harris**

A lot of the plans I have seen in the project rely on the willingness of government agencies to act as information providers. How do you see that working out? Are the other agencies willing to share their databases?

**Alolod**

Yes, I think that's a common agreement among government agencies, and the fact that we will be hosting the web sites of government agencies later on then we can make efforts to really make available to whoever would need this information. We're offering them good incentives, we're providing free service for one year , web sites and email services . We have organised a consortium and after one year they will pay a subscription fee so the IS can be maintained. So with that arrangement I am sure that we can really share the information that they have.

**Harris**

To what extent are the other government departments already using computers, and do they have plans to serve the citizens through the use of computers?

**Alolod**

Yes, in a way we have started already with some of the data banks with agriculture, but the problem here in Caraga is we need a constant turnover of Director, so it has not yet stabilised itself. We can also bring in the services of the local universities.

**Harris**

Do you have academics attached to this programme, maybe to conduct base-line studies or impact assessment?

**Alolod**

Perhaps later on, that could be done. Because for the moment we are still trying to strengthen the infrastructure.

**Harris**

OK, thank you for your time, that's been very helpful.

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## Interview Transcipts

**Malingao MCT**

Harris
What's the status with the internet connection in Malingao?

Merle
Because the internet connection is dependent on the telephone line being set in place, so we'd like to ask the committee of the community on the status of the connection, because that is dependent on when the internet link will be put in place. Bogs from TelOf.

Bogs
I just want to inform you that we from DOTC TelOf are in the process of rehabilitating the telephone system for your community. Last night I had a talk with our local staff from Iligan and the restoration is now on-going. They are in the process of restoring our repeater at the relay station and according to our technician, our engineers will be restoring within five days. So hopefully by next week, you will again have your telephone service and at the same time the MCT can be connected to DOST. I just want to take this opportunity for asking for your understanding why it took so long for your telephone service to be restored in this area. It so happens that we had an interconnection problem in Iligan with Maratel, so it took us almost two years before we were able to negotiate with Maratel for them to release our equipment because there was a problem with the billing system, and as a result Maratel decided to shut down our equipment. It took so long before the budget intended for the payment of our areas with Maratel took place, almost two years went on and fortunately within five days the service should be back after almost three years. Anyway, we from DOTC TelOf would like to inform you, our constituents, that we are in full support with the endeavours of the community and with the MCT project of the DOST (applause).

Merle
We have already made negotiations with an internet provider in Iligan, so after five days the link will also be activated. So we will now both have a telephone here and a Public Calling Office, and an internet link. So you can start familiarising with the technology with the help of the volunteers who have undergone training with the Philippine Science High School. So that's the connectivity status.

Harris
Has there ever been an internet link here?

Merle
No, none. Because when we already deployed the equipment it was also the time when the connections were down. This was down in September '99.

Harris
Who are the volunteers?

(Introductions)

Merle
How many volunteers do you have?  45 volunteers?

Merle
Now we meet the Secretary of the barangay council, he also staffs the telecentre
together with the volunteers.  45 volunteers, where are they now?

Community member
They are in school Ma'am, others are looking for a job in Manila.

Merle
Where they able to use their skills in computing in looking for a job?

Merle (translating)
They use their skills in computing in enhancing their chances of looking for a job.

Harris
Will the volunteers here be able to use the internet when it's connected?  (To a
volunteer) Can you use the internet?  Did you have some training?

Merle
I think you had two separate training.  The first set was  purely computing without
internet, the second was internet and web development.

Harris (To a volunteer)
What did you learn during the training?

Merle (Translating)
They had their training in the MSUIIT in Iligan City.

Harris
Did you learn e-mail?

Community member
Yes

Harris
Are you a volunteer?

Merle
She's not a volunteer but she also went for the training

Harris
I'd like to ask a volunteer.  Which e-mail package did you learn?

Volunteers
Yahoo

Merle
The people who went to Iligan, how many volunteers?  What was the email package you
used in the training.  Can you remember?

Volunteers

Yahoo

Merle
They can only remember Yahoo

Harris
Which internet search engine did you use?

(Discussions)

Merle
It was only one day training so they can't remember.  One day training, no hands on after that?

(Discussions)

Merle
That's the total in terms of the internet training.  You had some orientation here and you had one day in MSUIIT.  But you cannot remember clearly what was taught in terms of email and in terms of the search engine.  Probably because you did not have any follow-up.  Maybe it was not explained what a search engine or what e-mail package is

Harris
Where was the training conducted?

Merle
In MSUIIT.

Merle
Did you have training manuals or materials?

Harris
Maybe to the volunteers again, what is the role of a volunteer?

Merle (Translating)
What she said, she is in the MCT in order to learn about computing and the internet in order for her to learn the skills which will also be useful for her to find jobs and to service the needs of the community.

Harris
Have you used the computers since your training?  What have you used them for?

Merle (Translating)
She uses the computer to encode (type into a word-processor) requests for typing certification, for reports of the barangay officials, and the school, the teachers.

Harris
How often do use the computer?

Merle (Translating)
Every day, Susan is always here every day.  The two of you, you go to school?  So when they are free from school they come here.

Harris
How often?

Merle (Translating)
Once a week.

**Harris**
Susan, you're here every day?

**Merle (Translating)**
Every day with Willie and Alex.

**Harris**
Do you have an email address Susan? What is it? Can you write it down for me? I'll send you an email when your connection is up.

**Harris**
Who is in charge of the telecentre?

**Merle (Translating)**
Susan is in charge of the telecentre.

**Harris**
I'll send you an email Susan tonight, so as soon as you get connected you can reply to me. Do you know how to do that?

**Merle (Translating)**
She'll know how to do it.

**Harris**
Willie, you're the secretary, so who's in charge of the telecentre? Who's the boss?

**Willie**
I am the chair, Susan is the assistant.

**Harris**
OK. Do you have email?

**Willie**
No.

**Harris**
You don't have email. OK.

**Harris**
So Willie, what do you think is the purpose of the telecentre?

**Willie**
For communication.

**Harris**
So why do you want to communicate? What's the purpose of your communication.

**Willie**
For example, economics, economics regarding the crisis of the economic situation in our country.

**Harris**
Why are you interested in the economic crisis in your country?

**Willie**
Because our country (indistinct)

**Harris**

How is that going to help you here, in Malingao, in you know information about the crisis in the country?

(Silence)

Harris
Let me try another way, by asking the Captain. This is a beautiful part of the Philippines, but you have problems living here, I know. What are your problems in this community?

Teotimo Espra (Barangay Captain)
Peace and order.

Harris
Any more

Captain
Economic. The economic crisis.

Harris
Tell me about your economic crisis here in Malingao.

Captain and others
Low price of the products, copra. Unemployment, …

Harris
Tell me more, I want to hear about your problems.

Members
Low labour fee, low pay, drug addiction.

Harris
What type of drug?

Members
Shabu

Harris
How do you spell that?

Member
It's a heroin derivative

Harris
Is it produced here?

Members
It's a chemical concoction, not from local products.

Harris
Any other problems. How about health?

Member
No doctor. The doctor is in the town. We have a health centre, but no medicine.

Member
We do hope that we can get another computer to facilitate the production of our reports.

Harris
What reports?

Member
Reports from the committee.

Harris
With all these problems and you want a computer to write your reports?

(laughter)

Harris
Willie, talking about the role of the telecentre.  Do you think you can help with these problems?

Willie
We need another unit.

(Discussion on purpose of telecentre and community problems)

Merle (translating)
They use the computer to prepare their programmes, proposals, resolutions.

Merle
How do you promote the telecentre services to the rest of the community?

Merle (translating)
The promotion is done through communications of the Purok leaders, or zone leaders. When the volunteers were trained they also communicated to the community that there are now trained volunteers and they can now re-train other people.  Also specially from the school system of other barangays, not only Malingao, they now pop here to use the computers.  And the farmers know about the telecentres from the children who are trained in the telecentres.

Harris
How do you tell the community?

Captain
There is written communication.

Harris
Can you show me the written communication?

Harris
You mentioned the volunteers had trained members of the community.  How many?

Merle (translating)
They were students from the school.  It's difficult to retain the volunteers because they are really volunteers.  They don't have any incentives or pay, so some of them have to go out and look for work.  Later on as the business part (of the telecentre) becomes viable, the volunteers will tend to be regular staff of the telecentre and they will have their salaries.  But you will have to promote it, not only within the barangay but also within the district.

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## Interview Transcipts

PCHRD

**Taguitic MCT**

Harris
When did the telecentre in Taguitic open?

Merle (translating)
April 2000.

Harris
Did it start with an internet connection?

Merle (translating)
No, because the telephone link here was down September, the whole province was down September 1999.

Harris
Any internet connection now?

Merle (translating)
None.

Harris
Are the volunteers here?  All volunteers, hands up.

Harris
Six volunteers here, 15 total.

Merle (translating)
They have trained 40 people.

Harris
As volunteers?

Merle (translating)
They are not volunteers.  The volunteers trained another 40 people.

Harris
One of the volunteers, Cherry, what do you think is the role of the volunteers?

Cherry
Educate the people about the computer, what is the computer and educate the people

about the use of the computer.

Harris
Why is the computer important?

Cherry
It is important in the sense that for example to see how the assignment in the school, we use the computer.

Merle (translating another member of the community)
It is important especially for the young people to develop their skills so that they are not left behind from the skills of the people in the city.  It is also important for the students in preparing their reports, their papers, and other things.  It is important o have a background in computing because in seeking jobs, usually all the employers ask for your proficiency in computing.  That is a good advantage that you have with this skill.

Harris
Who is in charge of the centre?

Merle (translating)
The MCT advisory council has designated Narciso Mapa as the manager of the telecentre.  The volunteers organised themselves and elected Narciso Mapa as the chair of the volunteers and he is also the manager.  But he is not here?

Harris
Where is he?

Merle (translating)
He is in xxxxxxxx.  He's a policeman so he comes here every week.  So if he's not around who's in charge?

Members
Cherry

Harris
Who runs the centre when Narciso is not here?

Merle (translating)
(Indistinct)

Harris
Capitan, what do you think is the purpose of the telecentre?

Merle (translating)
He said the telecentre is important because it's a way for them to adopt new technology that will not leave them behind progress, like for example in the shipment of their crabs to Manila.  If they use the fax machine, they know immediately the result of their shipment. Whereas if the use the telegraph, it will take time to know the status of their shipment.  So they feel that embracing technology will help them progress in a way that other places cannot.  And it is important to educate the young people to prepare themselves better for the employment and for their own work.  The computers are also useful for the barangay council operations, like in delivering service, issuing barangay clearance, or barangay business so they are already holding forms in the computer so it easy for them to now service the community who enquire for these.  And in addition, they also get income from the services they deliver to barangay.

Harris
Is there anybody else here, other than the volunteers., who has found the MCT to be really useful to them?

Merle (translating)
The computers are important in the preparation of the summons that will be bought to the town.

The centre has helped them in preparing programmes because formerly they had to go to the town and request the people there to do the programmes for them, especially for special events.

Harris
What do you mean by "programmes"?

Merle (translating)
Special event programmes, not computer programs.

He said, after joining the volunteer group, he's not behind the other classmates who learn computers in other schools, and now he can understand the computer course and he's able to catch up equally with other students.

The telecentre was used to prepare wedding invitations, especially for her daughters who are getting married. I think that if they had got married earlier, she has to go the city to spend cash for the wedding invitation and she was saying because that now she is a widow, maybe for her second wedding (laughter) if she can marry again it will be easy for her to get the invitations.

He said the telecentre is important to help the young people, in particular his child.

Harris
I'd like to ask Capitan, what are the problems that you face in living in Taguitic?

Merle (translating)
Low yields for fishing and subsistence farming. There's unemployment, especially the out of school youth and it's a mission of the barangay council to help them so that the unemployment of the out of school youth will go down then the drug addiction will go down. And also livelihood support for the women and the mothers specially if the income of their spouses are not enough.

Merle (translating)
Taguitic is mainly a fishing community so income really comes from fishing and we all know that the marine resources of XXXX bay have been diminishing over the years. Although the government has made a programme of the fish sanctuary they still need alternate sources of livelihood, especially for the women and the out of school youths, and in fact these low incomes have prevented them from sending their children to school, even in the public schools system because every now and then there are contribution which have to be given by the parents. Maybe the Canadian government could help them in looking for alternative livelihood sources for the people here apart from the traditional fishing and to also enable the out of school youth to go to school.

(Discussion on using the internet to obtain and share knowledge)

Merle (translating)

He was asking if the telecentre can also provide assistance to the elderly members of the community who are not able to go on hard labour. These are one of the concerns of the ommunity.

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## Interview Transcipts

PCHRD

**Agustin R. Bengzon, Under-Secretary for Communications, Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC)**

Bengzon
How are your multi purpose centres coming along?

Merle
The one in Agusan Norte has been connected to the internet since August last year, but we had change in the configuration to speed up the lines, so that wasn't operational in November last year.

Bengzon
How many computers are there?

Merle
There are two computers at the moment for the learning stages. They feel they are in the preliminary stage and they had some problems with the connection

Bengzon
They did not go to us?

Merle
The local TelOf office is there and also with the national office here.

Bengzon
Can I make a suggestion, that from now on regarding those and the others, if you have any problems with other government agencies we would appreciate knowing about it, because we are on top of TelOf of MTC and so that we can help you move it faster,. Because sometimes my observation is that they try to solve it there until it takes too long, where sometimes a phone call can cut the process by one month. Sometimes also, I don't know why, I don't get the phone call, so it can take six months. To solve when it when it can be solved with a call so my message. So to you at DOST, when you think their are any hindrances to moving forward don't hesitate to bring it higher to the level than you're at because I assure you we can move much faster.

Merle
We made a presentation to you in November

Bengzon
Did it help?

Merle

In Lanau del Norte

Bengzon
But we have to know the problem.  I am requesting officially.  The official contact is now my office.  I'd like to make sure that my office is notified.  So please keep in contact

Merle
The communities in the barangay also went to your office, about their complaint about their operation there…in Jaliobong

Bengzon
I never heard about it.

Erminda (E. Dionisio-Ora, Program Facilitator & Project Development Office)
We have already solved the problem.

Bengzon
Is it working now?

Erminda
It's working now

Bengzon
To your satisfaction?

Merle
The one in Jaliobong is not working sir

Bengzon
It's not working.  She said it's not working.  Did it only bog down today?

Merle
Later part of the project.  It was working two weeks ago.

Bengzon
It bogged down two weeks ago?  And it hasn't been fixed since then?

Merle
Bog said the MCI people are going there to fix it.

Bengzon
What is the involvement of MCI?

Merle
I think they are the provider of the pay phones.

Bengzon
Who bought the pay phones?

Merle
It's TelOf who were negotiating with MCI

Bengzon
I haven't received any report about this.  I wanted this conversation to happen.  How about the three other MCTs?

Merle
The two MCTs in Lanoa will just be connected.

**Bengzon**
You say two in Lanao?

**Merle**
That's four, two in Agusan del Norte and two in Lanau. So the telephone link in Lanao Norte after two years will just be up within the week as we were advised by the TelOf engineers.

**Bengzon**
But I cannot believe such time it takes, I am very surprised.

**Merle**
Sir, our system is designed only for voice, but we want later a telecentre so there should be an upgrading for the system that's what is being done by the TelOf people.

**Bengzon**
This should have been brought to me already so we could have moved faster.

**Merle**
While we were here we reported the status to you, late November we told you about the whole situation with Maratel, I think you called Maratel at that time but you were not able to get connected to that person, the other person was out.

**Bengzon**
These are the bugs I want to remove, immediately. When we follow up and for example we don't get contact the first time we expect the party to say "Look we called but nothing happened" and I don't expect that call to come in six months, I want it to come in a few days. I f we don't get any feedback, we cannot act. If the communication comes to my office, then we can help. So, in short, out of the four, how many are really running the way you envisage?

**Merle**
Two.

**Bengzon**
Only two. And both in Agusan. And the other is, they have but no ISP, or what?

**Merle**
No, the problem is they do not have a telephone, since two years ago. Because there was a change in the station. We had to transfer the MPP base station to another extension . From the Maratel co-location, the regional office put up another infrastructure near the backbone. So that's been done already.

**Bengzon**
Because if was done in our Public Calling Office it would have been much easier.

**Merle**
It's a public calling office that we're working with.

**Erminda**
To them it's been a problem between Maratel and the payment of the bills. They shared a location.

**Bengzon**
Is it working now?

**Merle**
It will be working they said within five days, because they are just charging the batteries.

.
**Bengzon**
When is the five days?

**Merle**
We are reckoning it from last Thursday, we just went there.

**Bengzon**
So the f8ive days will be this week, Tuesday.  It that the reason why Bogs is there?

**Merle**
Yes he went all the way from Agusan.

**Bengzon**
So in five days it should be up and running?

**Merle**
Yes the whole province, the connection for the whole province in Lanao.

**Bengzon**
Yes, but I'm more concerned about…

**Merle**
Also the MCT

**Bengzon**
So that hopefully by this week, the four will be up and running?

**Merle**
Two in Agusan are already running.

**Bengzon**
SO by this week the other two should also be running?

**Merle**
Yes, after the phone link is up they will be connected to the internet.

**Bengzon**
So it's only the phone link, so it's not a multi-purpose telecentre, it's only a phone link?
So there's no computer yet, no information…

**Merle**
There's computer and information on CDs.

**Bengzon**
But no access to the internet.

**Merle**
No, no access, until the phone.

**Bengzon**
But the multipurpose telecentre needs access to the internet.

**Merle**
Yes it's a major component

**Bengzon**
Ok, it's not yet 100% complete by the time you install the phones, and get computers but

you're not access to the world.

Merle
For the Lanao, the phone will be up tomorrow, so next week it should be access to the Internet, because we have been talking to the ISP there.

Bengzon
So that is the DOST part of the responsibility. Have you signed up already?

Merle
We have an application, but it's not yet signed.  We have the budget.

Bengzon
So we are waiting for you to tell us when you are connected to the ISP.

Merle
We will advise you directly.

Bengzon
So that we will also know that everything is complete.  Because what we interested in is to find out how effective it all is and what are the lessons learned.  That is what we are looking to.  That is the reason why I want to ask these questions, to help you move it rather than getting stuck when you can easily move it.  Thank you.  Your turn Professor, what can I do for you?

Harris
What further plans are there for the remaining Barangays?

Bengzon
We would like to install multipurpose telecentres in all the municipalities in the country, numbering 1,525.  If you ask us what give us the confidence to make these sustainable, my first statement is as follows: we in the Department own 672 public calling offices (PCOs) all over the country, although we realise that all of them are in operational condition, we are working to get them operationalised, because we have already got the spare parts, and we are in the process of installing the spare parts, and hopefully, a bigger percentage of the PCOs will be working and our concept there is just tun upgrade them, just to add a computer, a fax, a printer and a scanner. That to us should cost no more than 100,000 pesos only.  (US$2,000 each).  By doing that, we will be … by the way, all of this is private sector funded, our programme is to show them the way, to help them get regulatory incentives.  We realise that of these 1525 about 282 municipalities still do not have access to phone lines, so we are going to give priority to the 282.  Priority only in terms of giving them incentives.  At the municipal level we know that they can manage so we don't need to give them incentive there.  So once it is upgraded, the private sector money with government co-ordination, incentives, the private sector, because we don't want to make the mistake again of after government spend money then we privatise it.  We don't want to go through that process.  So we want to go right away and privatise it, from day one.  Also, we know that the private sector has close to 800 PCOs.  So with our 670 plus and the private sector 800 plus, we are confident that getting an MCT in 1575 municipalities over a three year period should not be a pipe dream but will be a reality.  Of course with adequate incentives and political will to move ahead, with a certain direction.  That is on the MCT, that's why we're very interested to find out the success/failures and whatnot of this form of telecentre.

Harris
Would it be true to say that your are convinced that the MCTs can induce development in the rural communities?

Bengzon
More than convinced.

Harris
Where do you have the evidence for that?

Bengzon
We don't need a study for that.  We are so convinced that it will be there. From the economic benefits that it brings, all sorts of economic benefits, the financial; benefits, the private sector will do their own things with pushing but from government we know that most economic benefits will accrue to them.

Harris
Do you feel that the project so far in DOST has helped to strengthen that conviction?

Bengzon
That's' why we're waiting, but we're sure it will, but we will go with or without DOST.

Harris
You've already made the decision to proceed, so how is this project going to contribute to your future planning?

Bengzon
It can contribute also because we can also learn from whatever might be their shortcomings.  But we are not waiting for DOST that's for sure.  We've enough evident to be sure.

Harris
Other than the technology…

Bengzon
We are using available technology that is available on the ground that the private sector is using.  We have three technologies going now, we have satellite, we have wireless and we have land lines, so whatever technology the player on the ground wishes to install for that particular MCT, we are not tying their hands down, we are giving the choice, whichever is most cost effective for him and whichever technology he believes will get him the returns he would like.  And it's private sector driven, that's the magic formula here.  It's a combination of private sector, government, working together to get it done in the shortest possible time at the least possible cost to government but at the most efficient level from the private sector's point of view.  We have had numerous consultations with the players on the ground and they agree with us.  We are talking to groups who will be operators on the ground.

Harris
But as with all private operations there will be successes and failures…

Bengzon
We are definitely seeing that as another beauty here, because then when the private sector is interested, we don't have to baby them, they will be on their own.  We give them the direction, the co-ordination, and all the regulatory incentives that we think they need.  That's the beauty of this programme, it's not government it's private sector.  So we should be too concerned like in previous programmes where govt. was so bogged down in studies and studies, and then blocked by supplier-driven contracts, and what happens to us? We get a white elephant that we try to privatise and we loose money all along.  This way, we don't loose time, we don't loose money.  We gain time and we don't get into borrowing.

Harris
At the level of content, how do you expect information sources…

Bengzon

That's where we're working with other government agencies for content. We have a team working on that. That's why we're also working with DOA, (Department of Agriculture) DOE (Department of Education) DOH (Department of Health), those are the three agencies we want to work with because they have the content. And also DOST.

Harris
The social mobilisation at barangay level to make use of this information. Is that…

Bengzon
At the municipal level we don't have any doubt that this will be fully utilised. Because we are talking abut one computer initially, and the private sector can always add one or two more. There are plenty of Internet cafes here in the cities. You can not imagine the growth of our cellular industry. We are selling 300,000 units every month, so we are growing by 3,600,000 every year for the mobile industry.

Harris
Do you expect the same response from rural communities?

Bengzon
Well of course because rural communities are not the same as the cities, we know that. We move around, I have people on the ground, they tell me that. I am not worried about that. It will grow as the business grows. The private sector is driving it. And they can market it. We have experience with our TelOf Office, and the difference between a good PCO and lousy PCO is the manager. These are the facts. Why is it that one PCO can generate a thousand and another can generate 100,000? What studies do I need? It's just a question of getting the right man, and the right man is a private entrepreneur who will share in his profits. He will put in his 100,00 but we will recover that in less than a year.

Harris
So you think your PCO experience relates directly to an MCT?

Bengzon
Of course. 100% relation, very direct. He can make 100,000 from just calling, no computer, no access to games, can you imagine? We don't need a study for that, I'll debate that anywhere.

Harris
But the management of an MCT, by selling a bit more than telephone calls, they're selling content…

Bengzon
Exactly, yes and we have no worry abut content, we have so much content, except that it is not yet organised. It's a chicken-and-egg thing you know, we've got to move somewhere so they'll come.

Harris
That seems to be a key issue for this project, looking at the management of an MCT.

Bengzon
Yes we have experience in the management of a PCO, operation, maintenance, and this has built up over years. I've listening to the regional directors for o0ver one and a half years and listening to their success, and they can be easily be replicated. If they cannot make it, it is only because they are incompetent or lazy, or downright just waiting for their pay. Sitting on their ass, that's all.

Harris
Evidence from elsewhere suggests that local entrepreneurship seems to useful in the….

Bengzon
Of course. In fact it is not useful, it is essential. The entrepreneurial aspect of this project is very important, and we are confident that the entrepreneurs will come in.

Harris
Are you describing a franchise model here?

Bengzon
We're talking about that but to make it fast we are initially saying that they can do this , right away, to lease. And we are making sure that the lease contracts will not stand in the way to eventual privatisation of all our PCOs. So we are also very deep into privatisation. We don't need any more reason to have to justify that we should privatise. We are already convinced. It's only resistance from the bottom that slows down the privatisation part. It is resistance from those who just want to get their pay and don't want to move and work. But that's why you have PCOs that can rake in 10,000 and those that can rake 160,000. It's as simple as that.

Harris
Do you have any concerns that the rural communities might be left behind by commercial interests?

Bengzon
Well that's why we have another aspect of our Alternative Communications Programme, and that is to again to private sector funded operated and everything, we are putting up incentives to provide access, I stress the word access, to a pay phone in all 34,900 barangays. As I say that it looks so daunting, 34,900 is a lot of villages. But when I say I stress to you access, what I mean is we would like to see a pay phone accessible to clusters of barangays. And therefore, as we speak of 34,900 barangays, we don't mean installation of 34,000 pay phones. We are talking of something like 9,500, at most 10,000 0pay phones, strategically located in clusters of barangays so that other barangays can have access. We have already defined what we mean by access, again we don't need a study, we are saying here walkable. Because our people here in the villages walk a lot, and as long ass it walkable in 30 minutes, then we are saying they have access. We are doing that by having a draft of an executive order, which we are now fine tuning, on what i9ncentives to put in there so that it becomes a viable operation, for definitely 3 or 4 years after they start operation, they should be profitable. That's the answer to the rural…. That is the structure of our programme for next three years.

Harris
How do you see the involvement from the Canadian agencies that have been assisting so far?

Bengzon
Well, we welcome that. The private sector and any advice to us, with these success models. We are always ready to fine tune, that is the mode of this new administration. It passes a law even though it knows it is imperfect, and while it is on-going it already moves for an amendment of the law, because it cannot wait forever. And that's th4e same principle we are applying here, we cannot wait, we've got to move, but we welcome men of goodwill, nations of goodwill who want to put in their 10 cents, 209 cents. We will accept the advice, but we will weight it, it is good for us we will accept it, if it is not good for us we will kindly say, "thank you". We are helping the private sector get concessionary rates for loans.

We want to be an ICT-led Philippines. So how can we if we're not taking ICT all the way to the rural communities? This ACP programme has as one of its principle aims to break the digital divide. If we don't have that programme, we exacerbate that instead of bridging it.

Harris

Do you see a role for NGOs in this programme?

Bengzon

Yes, NGOs are always a good group to work with.  Well I say yes, as long as the NGO is willing to put up 100,000, but if the NGO is just a kibitzer to the entrepreneur, I don't know about that. I am willing to meet with NGOs and come up with a programme for them.  We include the possibility of anyone being a call agent.

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## Interview Transcipts

**Dr. Pacita L Zara, Executive Director, Philippine Council for health Research and Development (PCHRD), DOST**

Harris
Could you explain the purpose of this project, as you see it?

Zara
One of the major programmes as regarding the present administration is the development of Mindanao, as we thought that so many rural areas in Mindanao were in need of an information and communication system.  So they are so backward and there's a need for them to develop and this is one of the strategies for us possibly to help these rural areas to develop, and of course information and communication with is the most current and the most progressive way for developing this country.  And I think with the initiative of one of our consultants, that she mentioned about information and communication technologies and did suggest that we should try some studies, and the chose was from the Mindanao areas.  So this is the start of the MCT project.

Harris
As a pilot project, what do think you have learned from it so far?

Zara
Well actually, there are lots of problems for us.  Firstly, it's the willingness of the community to accept the project, if they willing to really learn and to develop their capacity to harness information and communication technology for their welfare.  Do we have the means to move then to development.  Like for example, we have to ask other government agents to help us with this development, especially TelOf, the telecomms office.

Harris
Was that a particular challenge, having to co-ordinate with different government offices?

Zara
Of course, it was a challenge, you can ask Merle, she's the one personally going there.  During these first few months I think she has been there every month.  And I think participation especially from the rural areas, there is a need for that.  From the conceptualisation, you have to include them in the presentation of the idea, to let think they are a part of it, it's not from us dictating to them.  Make them feel that they are part of it, that they are part of the organisation, they are part of the idea.

Harris
I noticed in the proposal, it's described as a participatory project, how do you define that level of participation?  Participation by whom and to what level?

**Zara**
Participation by the community itself, the people, through their council. Because they have an organisation there where they have officers from the barangay council. And we see also that the office is in the barangay centre.

**Harris**
What would you say are the main problems that have you have encountered.

**Zara**
Well I think we have difficulty with people to take charge; we had difficulty also with choosing the right people to be volunteers. I think what we did was really to…because we have our regional office, and it was through the regional director that we told the Director to help us in choosing the people to participate.

**Harris**
Would you say that was a particular strength?

**Zara**
It's a strength, because we have a regional office helping us, because they know the people, the communities, they know who are the leaders.

**Harris**
So again, as a pilot, at some stage it has to come to an end, when you say "this the end of the pilot",…

**Zara**
Exactly, this is one of our major concerns, when we phase out, what happens to the community? So we are trying to, I think one of the strategies is to develop some income generation, so that they can fend for themselves in the future.

**Harris**
Do you have a particular exit strategy from the pilot that would lead naturally into this income generation?

**Zara**
Well, I think we have not really defined it in the true terms. Sooner or later we will.. We will need a good strategy for getting funds. If the NEDA would work on this then we would push through with the expansion. NEDA is the highest planning body.

**Harris**
So you expect more funding?

**Zara**
Hopefully, let's cross our fingers.

**Harris**
We were at the DOTC with the Under-Secretary, and gave us quite a lot of background on the Alternative Communication Programme (ACP), and I think the impression that this would be going ahead, setting up MCTs in public call offices, something like 1,500 munici0palities, and I got the impression that was already going ahead, whether or not you were doing your pilot, and they seem to have their own plans to proceed.

**Zara**
Do they have their own MCT?

**Merle**
No Ma'am, because they are connecting our MCTs, they are getting lessons from our MCTs. Before they have a TelOf project. A telephone for every barangay, and I think that there was some controversy, so they called the next programme an Alternative

Communication Programme.  And Under-Secretary Bengzon was saying that rather than get the full lessons from the pilot MCT, they are going ahead with the executive order.

Zara
I think there are some lessons from us.  One of the important things is for the barangay to be involved

Merle
But they were going to be present in the municipalities, the 1500 telecentres that they were saying, and as we also talked further with their staff they are really concerned with the telecentre definition but it's really the infrastructure of their Public Calling Office that they're more concerned with, not the social development aspects.

Zara
Social development should go hand-in-hand.

Merle
But their draft executive order is really more on the infrastructure.  They were saying …

Zara
We can make use of their infrastructure.

Merle
I think Roger was just concerned as to whether the DOST pilot project was completed or not, they are going ahead with their Alternative Communication project.

Harris
Yes.  I mean as a pilot, you may decide that the whole concept of rural connectivity is not feasible, for whatever reason.

Merle
But I think that they are at the drafting stage, and the Secretary at the cabinet level can input our ….

Zara
We have our own Secretary who is inputting, that is why we are asking for the information so we can have our advisory to the Secretary who can comment in the next cabinet meeting if the draft executive order is presented.

Harris
There does seem to be some very valuable lessons from your project and it would be a shame if they were not built in to the ACP, especially as you mentioned with regard to social development, which doesn't seem to be their prime concern.

Zara
As a matter of fact, it should start with social preparation.

Harris
So is it possible to look at this pilot project and to be able to say fairly unambiguously how you will know when the pilot has been a success? Can we define those conditions that will say that it has been successful?

Zara
Probably a big one is political will.  If we can get the political will then we will pursue the project.

Harris
Can that be translated into real benefits for the community?  Is it more concerned with getting votes?  Is there anything else within the social impact of ICT in the rural setting

that you could define as an indicator that define the success of the concept?

Zara
Well when we see that many people are using these facilities, and many would like to be trained to increase their capacity.

Harris
So far do you have any feel for the impact that the MCTs have had on the rural communities so far?

Zara
Well the one big thing I can see from the internet is that the communities and also their desire to generate income in order to pursue their projects, even after the period of the support and I think we call it like that they are stage one, developing their capacities. They are trying to develop their own content, from their own communities.

Harris
With regard to content, I notice in you project activities, Merle has been networking with a lot of mostly government agencies as potential content providers. How successful do you think that has been so far?

Zara
I think just starting. We cannot say at this point in time.

Merle
We are providing the necessary input for what applications should be useful in the community setting, and what are existing, where they can help with experts, for instance, where are the doctors.

Zara
But I believe right now, we are not in a position to say. It's never ending, right? But we have to find ways and means.

Harris
How much influence can you bring to bear on these information providers? I mean, if you identify useful sources of information, in health or education, commercial activity, agriculture extension, what influence can you bring to bear on the institutions to make that information available in the form in which the communities can us it?

Zara
We have really had a very good response from every organisation and institution as a matter of fact. They have several committees that are responsible for the implementation of the content.

Merle
We have the network, we work within the network, there's a grant mechanism. The Council can share if seed money has to be made available to start them off.

Harris
So you can actually pay them?

Zara
Yes as a starter to train them. And also at the council we can participate, especially in public health.

Harris
So that hasn't become a problem for you up to now?

Zara

No.

Harris
Coming back to the operations of the MCT, do you believe that a rural MCT can be self-sustaining as a result of your experiences?

Zara
It is difficult to answer that, but I can see that it can be very successful, it's just a matter of getting more support from organisations. But if infrastructure is there the people are reading, the people are learning, so we are trying and we are just hoping, it's difficult to give a definite yes.

Harris
I've been asked to comment against the original proposal, but I know change as they go along, they have to in response to circumstances, but one of the ideas that I picked up was to test alternative models of operation of the MCTs, and I wonder if you've been able to do that.

Merle
We have four sites, and we are using the same model, but the way they actually work is different. Like we have anchored our project in the within the local government unit, the barangay council and we have volunteers staffing the telecentre but the way they react to the model is different.

Zara
They are different stages of development.

Merle
The actual operations are different, depending on the leadership and the power structures, and the aggressiveness of the volunteers, how the community responds to the initiatives.

Harris
You said the "primary output of this project is a model of operation of the multipurpose community telecentres". Are you getting close to that now?

Merle
The ideas are taking shape, it's just a matter of putting them down onto paper. There's a lot of factors at work. What works for one barangay doesn't work for another barangay.

Zara
We wait for them to develop their systems, instead of us dictating to them.

Harris
Will you be able to, when you say there differences in operation between the barangays, is there any way of defining the circumstances under which one way of operation works in one place and not in another?

Merle
It can be done. In terms of modelling, If a particular model were adhered to when there's a strong leader and he treats the community as a nurturing father. In this particular community this leader is so strong the people want to really be at one with him. In that sense we can right down the models.

Harris
We found some ambiguity with regard to the actual management of the MCT. In some cases they were a little bit unsure as to who was the manager. Linking that to the management of PCOs and the management of MCTs, which is probably quite different, I wondered if you had been able to prepare any material to describe the role of the

manager of the MCT?

Merle
Up to this point there is difficulty in saying who is the actual manager of the telecentre because, remember they work within the ambit of the barangay council, and the volunteers work with the barangay council, they haven't really defined a separate distinguishing personality of their own.

Zara
How about the barangay Captain?

Merle
The council delegated the operations to the volunteers who also elected officers from among themselves.  But that's up to the volunteers who are asked to chair and in some cases he or she is the natural manager.

Zara
Sometimes it's also difficult to have volunteers.  Only in their free time.  At the moment they're not being paid.

Merle
Actually, every day they are there.  They made a schedule.  And they have an understanding.  They understood that later on when the MCT becomes an institution, they will receive a salary.  Up to this point it's like a project of the barangay council.  And the barangay council usually assigns a person form the council to oversee the MCT operation on behalf of the council.  And then there's a core of volunteers who organise themselves, electing a chair from among themselves.  On the operations level, it's the chair of the volunteer group who is organising it on a day-to-day basis.  But on behalf of the council, there's a person who oversees the operations.

Zara
That guy reports to the council.

Merle
So it's really fluid up to this point until they spin it off as a separate enterprise, which they should.  Like in Jaliobong, the former capitan was saying we should spin it off as an economic enterprise. In that context I would assume that it will be an entity by itself.

Harris
Another item that I saw somewhere was about annual evaluation of performance indicators.  Did that take place?

Merle
There are annual evaluations by (xxx) agencies. When IDRC comes in, it's a form of evaluation.  But when we also go there, like myself and some of my staff, it's partly evaluation and consultation, but in terms of errr…, we haven't really done a formal evaluation.

Zara
I think we should.

Merle
Yes, right after the process documentation is ready for our executive.

Zara
We're ongoing evaluation.

Harris
Did the IDRC visits result in some of documented reporting that was left behind?

**Zara**
No.

**Merle**
But what we do is prepare minutes of the meeting.

**Harris**
Did you find that useful?  Is it helpful when they come here?

**Zara**
Of course, they give us advice.  It's consultancy also.

**Merle**
They bring also materials, like CDs for the community.

**Zara**
For me that's an evaluation.

**Harris**
Because this project is government lead, where there any lessons that yo0u particularly learned from your multi-sectoral, multi-agency, multi-department structure?  If you had to do it over again, might you structure it slightly differently?

**Zara**
Within the Philippines, things really start with the government.  The government initiates, and later on we transfer to the private sector.  As a matter of fact, our own council had the possibility to initiate activities which we feel are priority and make people realise that this is indeed a priority programme that should be taken up by the country, and convince the private sector to co-operate, or the NGOs.  Perhaps the government can start most conveniently to do it because it can handle the financial aspects.  But of course we cannot sustain.  We have to advise the private sector and NGOs to take over.  And perhaps we should start now, selling the ideas to the NGOs.

**Merle**
In fact the FAA is already doing the documentation for us,  because they work within the community of civil society.  We have a network of, so they can be the advocate.

**Harris**
Given the energy required to co-ordinate the different bodies, you don't think there's any alternative to that?  If you had to do it again, wo0uld you adopt the same approach?

**Zara**
The NGOs are very active, local NGOs especially.  We could form like a partnership.

**Harris**
Is that still an option?

**Zara**
Yes.

**Harris**
Are you considering that?

**Zara**
Yes, perhaps to start with NGOs,

**Merle**
If we make sure they are strong, we can help them out perhaps with financial support,

linking them with government…

Zara
But some have more funds than I!  They are more agile.

Harris
You mention publicity, has there been much promotion of the project at national level, or maybe international?

Zara

Not really much national.  I think at this point in time it would be good to promote it.

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## Interview Transcipts

**Dr. Delia Torrijos**

Harris
Could you explain some of the background as to how this project got started, where you picked up the idea of rural ICTs, how it was initially occurred to you and then how you translated that into a proposal to the Philippine government?

Torrijos
It's an evolution in a sense, but you know, ever since I have been here working in the information area, I have always been perplexed by the fact that we keep on saying that information is power, information is empowering right? But how do you translate that in a national set-up like the DOST, and you are handling your let's say Director of Information Services, and how do you really relate this to the people out there in the rural areas, in isolated communities?  Or even how the poor people are able to help themselves, getting information.  And so this is why I kept asking myself, I mean we are setting up national systems, we are setting communication centres, information centres and we are creating databases, we are moving ahead with all this development, but how does it benefit the poor?  Where is the information there in terms of how are you going to affect the lives of the poor?  But more baffling than that is the fact that in many developing country situations not here in like here in Philippines, but in many developing country situations, I have seen how the poor are almost reduced to a point of helplessness and hopelessness, not because you are in a situation where there is no access to education, hardly if ever there is access, there is very little access, probably up to grade four or grade two, and then you are out, so how do you address the continuing development of the individual in a situation like that?   You have no access to government services, most of them are just you know, sort of by accident, you happen to know someone who is a Congressman and so on, so a little bit will trickle into your village.  But really insightful, purposeful programmes for development are never done in practice.  Very rare.

Harris
So what gave you the idea?

Torrijos
So, this is it.  I said to myself, "how will information affect them?"  So I said, if you have a facility in the rural community which can the point where the people can congregate, because the government cannot build facilities all over the place , they are too expensive,  with probably very limited use if they are not properly explained.  So, you build a facility in the village areas, in the country,  equip that with the necessary equipment and facilities and then you probably can make things work.  That is where we bring for example, information, we demonstrate and so on, you build your human

resources, you build the skills of people.  It will be demonstration centre.  It will be your strategic access point.  At least people will say, "Ah, we have access, I may walk miles, but I have access.  It's not that I have to go to Manila or any capital city, in order to have access or see those wonderful things that the modern world is about."

Harris
How did you get that idea?

Torrijos
I needed another partner to bring this down to that level, and that's why the promotion of literacy came to my mind. I was asked even to help, someone asked me in UNESCO, how will my literacy programme be more accessible to the people? I said you cannot really make them more accessible to the rural person if unless you are only dealing with how to read and write.  You teach them something that will improve their livelihood, and then you can get them into your literacy classes. You demonstrate that literacy is the way that by being literate, you are opening up a whole new wide world of livelihood.  And that's where I said, information is the key.

Harris
Literacy in the Philippines is already quite high, isn't it?

Torrijos
Yes, but I was talking about the other countries, or even in the Philippines.  Functional literacy is not all that high.  And if you go into the rural areas, that's where I think that's where you can really demonstrate that they don't understand why it's important to read and write.

Harris
I understand that you were instrumental in getting this (project) started. What happened? Who did you talk to?

Torrijos
After the literacy programme, I had to talk to the education, because literacy is tied with education.  On the one hand, I had the DOST (Dr. Torrijos worked at DOST for many years) from the country level who will need to make the public understand what science is all about and how it will improve their lives, and that's it.  I will put them together, in a sense, so I will talk to government people, and I have then started to deal with local government officials, because one result of bringing the programme down to rural areas is they need to have a partner who are the authorities in those rural areas.  I think what is important here Roger is that a complete understanding of people involved in terms of what sort of structure exists in the country.  What is there that we can make work that is not working?  So we make it work.  Because otherwise we will have to build an artificial system around it.

Harris
Did you choose DOST as the implementer?

Torrijos
Yes, yes.  Because well because it is also by convenience.  I have links to the DOST because I have been from here.  And before I left I think I have established a kind of reputation that I can open doors, right.

Harris
Within the context, did you think DOST was the most appropriate body to implement this idea you had of rural ICTs?

Torrijos
Not entirely, 100%, but I think they can have a good chance, because information is also been convoluted in this country to mean things like, and in other countries as well

especially in the communist controlled territory, information is always looked at something difficult and delicate to handle, sensitive, right? You may be teaching them activism, for example I was in Vietnam, they told me "Ah, are you going to teach them activism?" Activism in the right sense, I am going to teach them what you government are doing, you know, for them. This is a-political. Science and technology is a-political, so you can bring about a lot of changes in terms of policy if you deal with information as a-political as science. I mean in these countries it can be political too, no? But what I am saying in many of the developing countries, science is taken not with a political flavour but with something else.

Harris
Are you satisfied with the way the project has progressed so far? Are you happy with the outcome?

Torrijos
I am not really that 100% satisfied. Because I would want really it to be faster, but that is something that I think is difficult to attain because you are working against too many impediments.

Harris
Such as?

Torrijos
Such as, the local government people who need to understand that this is really something that they should be doing, right? They keep following the government set-up that should be with us co-operating and really understanding, but they don't understand, or maybe they refuse to understand. And the local people who probably they are doubtful as too what is this going to bring to us? So they need a very powerful demonstration programme or a good effective information campaign so that all this sort of fighting, doubts, suspicions etc. should be erased and we all move in one direction. The plans must be understood. The whole concept must be understood, and the benefits must be worked out.

Harris
What to you is the purpose of an MCT?

Torrijos
To me it is a place of hope. If you can make it really work, because in many of these developing country situations, there is no place to go. Probably the national authorities will say, "there are places because there are government agencies" but you know, even in Bangladesh, when in the beginning they said to me, "Oh, we done all this already Miss Torrijos, we have problems that go down to the grass roots, " I said, "these grass roots people, and I'm talking about 25 kilometres away from Dakar, people in the rural community, I ask you, because now I am not going to agree with you, I just want to ask you, one question, "If this person, who resides in this community dressed in slippers, just like a common person, with T-shirt and so on, walks into your compound, at the gate he'll be asked…" will he have access to your people who are supposed to be delivering services? Will he have access? He won't even have the time to walk into the office of the one who is administering this service Are you telling me they will have access? No sir! He will not have access. At the moment. That is what we should make . We should address those problems of no access.

Harris
You used the word "empowering" people. If you went to a community in Mindanao, what would you expect to see in order for you to describe them as empowered? What would they be doing? How would they be acting?

Torrijos
What do mean by empowerment of the people? When they are faced with problems, if

to look at… "where can I get the right information?" Either to what I read or to what advise? In other words, it comes naturally to them, like it comes naturally to them when they are sick, that the first thing that comes into their minds is to walk into a doctor's office or go to a hospital or to a clinic. I would like to see the people being empowered and using information and actually understanding what information can do for them. Thinking that when they are faced with problems, there must be a solution somewhere all of these books in all of these documents. There must be someone I can approach who can tell me so that I don't have to start from zero. This is how an educated person, an empowered person deals with things. At the moment they face problems and they don't know what to do. People are saying you're indecisive, but they do not understand, he is indecisive only because he doesn't have the right information, otherwise a decision can be taken immediately. In all levels.

Harris
So we have the technology, what else do you think the community needs to achieve this level of empowerment?

Torrijos
The people need to understand that this technology is just a tool. What is important is first of all, what they nee to have this motivation, to help themselves to improve, so that if they want to improve, there are ways of doing this. And this is what the MCTs will teach them, what to do. Because in many cases, what we consider as self explanatory is not self explanatory, is what we consider as something we are ashamed to even speak to people about. It is not that easily understandable. I have found this out. I find I don't have to say this, they should know this, but they don't. It is something that has not really occurred to them. Some basic things.

I was faced with a problem in Nepal, with some people who asked, "how can you be so sure this development is good for us. Why are you changing us?" So I said, no we are not changing you, we are only preparing you for the changes that are taking place around you, that is happening with or without you.

Harris
What is required in a project like this, especially when it's rolled out to 34,000 barangays, to achieve that level of motivation they you mentioned in the rural communities? What mechanisms do you think are necessary?

Torrijos
First of all I think that the mechanism that is necessary, we must grapple with the way information must flow. The way information is generated in this country, where are they, and how is it flowing down to the rural areas for actual use. So this means you need to know the structure now, and you need to make this structure work, in terms of generating information collecting information processing information disseminating information and the actual use of information. All the actors that have to activated must be in place. That's your source, because content is important. Of course, the telecommunication infrastructure must be laid there too, right? And also the agencies must work towards providing the right technology that is necessary and infrastructure that is necessary to make this information flow.. The second element I think is the powerful demonstration project, because these poor people, you are dealing with people who have no or not much social interaction, other than themselves, and the small group around them. You need exposure for these people. You need….some are very strong you know, some of these people have been over the years satisfied with just living on a day-to-day basis. They need to know a different concept of live. What the world now wants them to do. You cannot live on a day-to-day basis. In rural areas, you can equip them with powerful fishing boats, they manage to get the fishermen to have powerful boats so that they can fish farther out to sea and have better catch. So they come back with a full boatload of fish, they fish probably for one hour and then they go home and drink, the whole day! And I said, so why didn't you go back? You were equipped with a boat in order to help your catch so that you can save for the rainy days when you can't fish. No, but this is a way of life. And you have defeated the very purpose of this project.

Harris
Any ideas for a 'killer application' for rural communities?

Torrijos
Health is a good area. But I think also you can concentrate, maybe it's not a killer application, but in terms of, I would say, you can go the community and say, "what are the people doing, how are they doing this?" How much effort and at what cost? Because if you can improve those things that they are doing, with the technology that you are dispensing, or promoting, then that's it my friend. They go for it. What concerns most people is what they can see. It's not something we develop outside. We talk you know, we conceive. No! Let's go real, go to their place and see what they are doing.

Harris
So who is going to do that?

Torrijos
That's why the government has to be there. Because the government is supposed to be the key player here. To design the programmes, to address these things, but they are not doing that.

Harris
How do you think we might build that into this project?

Torrijos
You know in the Philippines, we have a good basis to start with for achieving this. Because the people now are becoming very conscious. Take a look at the recent election. I was really very encouraged. Because now, what they are doing.. people are now becoming very, how will I say, very well informed. So I think at this stage, at this level this is achievable now, maybe.

Harris
The question is how? What structure, what mechanism, who does it, who does the work to achieve this level of motivation, who identifies this application, who builds the necessary info4rmation flows, and motivates the individuals to use them? What kind of role is that? Is it a government officer, like Merle, to go around one by one, or is somebody at the local level in the local government structure?

Torrijos
You know when I build the MCT here, and the whole idea, I always started with a two-level type of project management. At the national level, is a management team, and at the community level is a management team. The idea being that the ones who understand better the community are those are in the community. The ones who are most concerned that this thing will succeed are the community people. So you have management team there that will provide the strong interest to make sure that everything functions and works. At the national level, I though that people at the community will have to have a conduit, will have to have a group of people who can source out the resources that are available in government offices. So, the people who are in the management people there say, "this problem is the very problem that in the programme of the Department of Agriculture, Mr. So-and-so is responsible." And so he talks to them, brings him down.

Harris
Have you see evidence of that structure in the current project?

Torrijos
Through them (Merle). Through the HERDIN (health information project). And through the xxxxx with the technical and regional networks, we were able to bring them together so that this national group, for example, now has given experts, they put them together

so that they can referee things.  And they participate in information evaluation.

Harris
So is it fair to say that this facilitating, two-level management structure, is already in place?
Torrijos
I think that in the case of health, maybe it is … the beginnings are there.  But it needs to be institutionalised.  All of these are happening simply because we have some key players who are very motivated, very sold to the idea, and so on.  Now that we have shown that it can work, it has to be institutionalised, and this is what I was telling her, that we should put that down in terms of a policy, like an executive order.  A law that creates, for example, the infrastructure and the content development, with full backing from everywhere.

Harris
An executive order would do that?

Torrijos
I think so.  Provided that the executive order is going to be manned by somebody who understands the whole thing, because I think, Roger, it's not easy, to understand.  Even for those people in government.

Harris
Is there anything you would like me to fund back to the funding agencies?

Torrijos
I would like you to feed back to the funding agencies; 1)That they should not be too impatient.  Social preparation is never done overnight.  Social preparation needs a lot of things and this kind of impediments needs to be sorted out from the very start.  And you need to really motivate people, and you need these donor agencies to really understand this and not be carrying through the rush for results.  It's not possible that way, because what can happen if it is not well prepared is that it's going to be even feeding the elite, and that's not our purpose.  There is also something that is very important.  I think donor agencies need to understand that when they go to the communities, they speak of their ideas about development that sometime do not work.  What they should do, because the donor agencies have their own programmes, they set their own priorities, sometimes they don't match with the needs of the country and the needs of the rural community.  SO what happens is that in the process of trying to accommodate so that it is receivable to the donor agency, we massage this project, to the point where we dilute the very purpose of it and people do not understand any more what they mean.

Harris
Do you see that happening in this case?

Torrijos
In this case, probably not.  Because you see, we are in a better position.  We are situated in a way…not properly entrenched…they are not the ones who are actually mandating, they are like in the periphery, so they don't have to put too much attention.  But I think it is a plus and a negative point, because I think we ought to think about continuity, we ought not to also confuse people, why is PCHRD dealing with MCTs, not just health?   The MCT is about other things.  A lot of things they are doing is about other things.  How come they are the one in charge?  You see, locating and siting a project is a very important aspect.  You must have the right interlocutor.  So that your mandate is not questioned all the way.  And you can also become a very effective conduit for putting the institutionalisation phase in place.

Harris
Do you think PCHRD is the right…

Torrijos

At the moment, I think they are in the best position because it is an agency that has the full support of the executive director, that's what gets them going otherwise all these things are in a flux, it can be questioned all the way down then you will have a difficulty of on the one hand you are trying to make do with your own resources and on the other hand you are trying to justify with the parent institution.  But we happen to be very lucky here because we have an executive director here who fully supports this thing.

Harris

Does a model of farmer-to-farmer information networks conform with your experience of useful information flows?

Torrijos

I think both models should be applied.  Farmer-to-farmer is also equally important but you have to also realise that, for instance, take a farmer here, we keep saying if we can give the farmer the market prices, if these farmers know the price of Mangoes in the world market, we say the farmers cam market their produce in the market better.  How, my friend?  I am a farmer, I know the mango so much in the market, so what do I do? All around me I am surrounded by agents that say you sell a mango for 10 pesos, and that's it! Can I do anything about it?  That's the kind of thing that the government has to run.  They need to build the roads that can reach that market, maybe the storage and handling so the farmers can then reach the markets were the people will but them at reasonable price, and not be at the mercy of those middle men. And you need to motivate them, so that they all working in the same harmonious government programme.

# Pilot Multipurpose Community Telecentres in Selected Barangays in the Philippines

PCHRD

for the

IDRC

by
Roger Harris

An evaluation and reporting on the implementation process and results of the Multipurpose Community Telecentres Project in Northern Mindanao.

## Interview Transcipts

**Dr. Estrella Alabastro Secretary Department of Science and Technology**

Alabastro
We should get more for the publicity for the project.

Harris
What is your assessment so far of the project?

Alabastro
Well I have just been hearing about it, this thing was already going when I left, I left in November of '98, so I'm familiar with the beginnings of this project. I am so gratified that it finally got implemented. Well I was gone for two and a half years you know, and there are many projects that I left in 1998 that are still just there you know, that we think about in a very nice way but we don't see anything being implemented, but this one you know, we have pushed it through, but of course it takes time but of course with assistance of very generous people in institutions outside the country.

Harris
From your perspective, what kind of questions would you expected to have answered from this pilot?

Alabastro
I would want to see how the community received it. I guess it must be something quite new to some of them and so whether they are able to make good use of it. What kind of uses did they see in the centre, what benefit are they able to get out of this. Was it just facilities to call outside or were they able to get very useful information through this facility and therefore were able to make better decisions. That's what Delia was saying, we have to talk about content. So if you're going to make information available to these facilities, what kind of information are they looking for?

Harris
In that context, I've observed the model being adopted here is very much one of government organisations providing information to communities. Do you think that's the best way to…?

Alabastro
No in fact I would like to the private sector to participate in this and this PCO, they want also the private sector to take the lead, but essentially to provide the infrastructure. I think in the content part, we are looking at institutions and agencies like maybe DOST to provide the content.

Harris
How can ensure that?

Alabastro

I cannot be sure, that's why let's see how the institutions in the area, in the region, can help. In the training of the people, even in the development of day to day to sustain the people to develop their day to day activities.

Harris

What plans anywhere are there for e-government? Providing government services through information technology.

Alabastro

There is the government IS Plan. The GISP, which has been approved at the highest level. I don't know how far we have done with the implementation, to be very candid about it, but a problem that has been raised about it, especially with the Department of Budget and Management, but right now there are some experiments that are ongoing among the financial institutions, and I talk also to the ?? commissioner, who is really very IT oriented. He is president of ??SO he said he is going to have or is putting into place on an experimental basis an auditing and accounting system that is IT based. But so this experiment will be done among the financial institutions so that's one Department, which is DOSE (?) which is a pilot, which is more IT oriented than the other departments. So that's one initiative that is being done, on the government side. I'm not sure if that's part of the GISP, because I have not really gone over it yet. But I did see in the first few pages of that GISP, that it has identified NCC s the lead agency.

Harris

In terms of policy, we have come across ITECC. Where does rural ICT fit?

Alabastro

It's no different, it's under ITECC. All initiative in ICT are under ITECC. It used NITC, the National IT Council, and then later on the e-commerce came so there were two separate councils and then they were merged into ITECC.

Harris

At a certain stage, the pilot has to end and then you make a decision as to whether to continue to roll out. How is likely to eventuate, the idea of rolling out to the other barangays?

Alabastro

Well if the ITECC says this is the way we should go then budget will be provided for it. We don't know if we need all the aid for this. But the concept will have to be developed with all the agencies, that will expected to participate, and even the private sector. But the pilot certainly will be very useful in determining how we will go.

Harris

We were at the DOTC earlier in the week with the under-secretary and he was describing this ACP, Alternative Communications Programme.

Alabastro

That's really infrastructure he is talking about. And then this will be discussed by the cabinet where the comment was we already have an RA (Republic Act) that will adequately cover whatever it is you want to do, so I think they should first at what is already in place which is a law.

Harris

So is this how connectivity will be delivered to rural communities?

Alabastro

I don't know how RA 6849 or 7925, whatever it is, but if you need to do something else, that can be accommodated under RA 7925 for example, and we prepare just an

amendment under the implementing rules, but then we can amend without going to the EO. It's really better to look at RA 7925 and see what modifications you need to put into the IRR (?) without changing the basic law.

Harris
One of my observations within the project one of the challenges is co-ordinating government agencies as information providers. We all agree that content is on the critical path as a critical success factor but one that from a management point of view you don't have control over. The agencies may or may or may not provide. Would you see that as a hindrance?

Alabastro
Well a couple of issues emerge from this experiment that we have and we think that these issues will have to resolved not by just the DOST but also will involve other agencies. The ITECC is the mechanism to bring about. So at some point in time, when we are ready, we can make a report to the ITECC. The working group will look into this, and tell you if it's ready to be elevated to ITECC.

Harris
Is there any resistance to the notion of rural ICTs among your colleagues?

Alabastro
No, everybody says it's a good idea, but how to go about doing it? Even the President herself says let's bring ICT to the grass-roots.

Harris
Is that what's convinced them it's a good idea? That the President's behind it?

Alabastro
The President has said from day one that ICT will be the main centre-piece of her administration and we think that everybody benefits from ICT.

Harris
But if somebody challenged you, one of your colleagues, could you say, look this is what we're doing already, he's an example of somebody who has…

Alabastro
No-body has ever dared to xxxx with ICT you know! It's a motherhood kind of thing. Everybody says that's a good idea.

Harris
I'm only surprised because outside there are a lot of critics. We were talking earlier about prominent people in the industry saying giving people to poor people is a waste of time.

Alabastro
No we're not giving computers to people. But we have equipped public schools. We have the mobile IT bus, so we have in fact been giving computers, and you know that it's a very puny effort to make our young kids aware of computers and what they can do but, everybody has to help you know, we can't do it alone. And so long as we know that this is really, as the President keeps on saying, it is only a few programmes that she is advertising. ICT is the first, agri-modernisation is another and tourism. So there are just three initiatives coming on.

Harris
The danger is of a "cargo cult." People see others using computers and enjoying benefits, so they think that just by getting computers they are going to enjoy the same benefits. Our observation is that you don't empower computers with technology alone.

**Alabastro**

If you look at putting IT within the grasp of the ordinary person, it's a way of empowering him also, if he gets access to information for example, similar to what we did with MinN, the Mango Information Network, to tie up the mango producing areas so that they would have access to technology, they would know the production volumes, at the moment, what prices are prevailing.  If you have access to information it can help you decide, for example, whether you should sell your mangoes at this price or maybe it should be higher.  I think that it is a very useful kind of information to have, especially because they available to use real time.  It's a way of getting the social equity aspect of what it is they are doing and we have to make sure that whatever benefits there are make their way down.

**Harris**

Our own observations in the villages is that they are using the computers to train the schoolchildren and for the barangay administration, which is fine, in fact for the schoolchildren it's wonderful, it's good, but it's not enough.

**Alabastro**

We know that it's not enough.

**Harris**

So we're looking now to find the mechanisms to weave the technology into social fabric of the community so that this idea of empowerment can take hold.  And I think there's still some work to be done there.

**Alabastro**

There's a lot of work to be done, we're just starting, we just have our feet wet.  We know there's a whole lot of work but we have to start somewhere.  We just have to keep on plugging along and not give up.  There will be sceptics for sure, but I believe on what we're doing.

**Harris**

Can I ask is there anything you want to say about the involvement of the Canadian agencies?

**Alabastro**

Well I think the Canadian government has been very supportive, in many of our projects, especially those with those affecting a large sector of people that are particularly disadvantaged and we do appreciate not just I guess the financial assistance but also technical assistance, more than the financial assistance, that we are grateful for.  Canada is much more advanced than the Philippines in many ways, including IT, and we want benefit from what it is that you (the Canadian Government) have accomplished and we are thankful that you have not been, that you have been very generous with technical assistance.

**Torrijos**

But I think the greater advantage is the fact that there is external assistance an external institute comes in a rural area like that, and promoting let's say the project, like the MCT project, it dramatises the impact.  It dramatises the importance and that attracts peoples' attention and makes them even more interested to see what is this, not that they believe in it 100%, but they look and see what is it really in this project, why is the Canadian Government for example, taking an interest in this?  Why is UNESCO coming into this project?  There must be something to it.  And that aspect of it is one that is I think the greatest help that an external donor agency can contribute.  Especially in a rural area where hardly even agency has looked in, so in that sense, it brings the two together.  It makes the government also function in a sense that oh, it's aiding us, it's coming to our aid.

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# Pilot Multipurpose Community Telecentres in Selected Barangays in the Philippines

A project by the Philippine Council for Health and Research Development (PCHRD) of the Department of Science and Technology

for the

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## Photographs

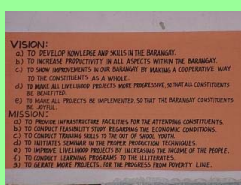**click on the thumbnail photos below to see the full-size version**

by
Roger Harris

PCHRD

## Jaliobong MCT


Jaliobong MCT


Jaliobong MCT Mission


School Lesson


New Building

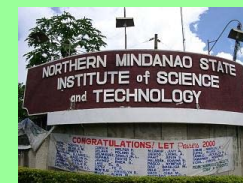
Community Meeting


Computer Lesson


Local Transportation


Barangay Council Goals


Barangay Hall/MCT


Project Team Members


Barangay Captain


Local Institute

## Maguinda MCT


Maguinda


Maguinda MCT


VIP Client


Sonia - Volunteer


Community Discussion


School Teachers


Local Transport


Sonia's Mum

Dodong and his Ducks


Dodong's House


MCT


Downtown

# Malingao MCT


MCT


MCT Interior


Community Members


Teotimo Espra
Barangay Captain


Willie Bartolomo
MCT Manager


Susanette - Volunteer


Resident


Local Transportation


Discussions


Market Produce


Business Operation


Farmers Supplies

# Taguitic MCT


MCT


Barangay Leader


Volunteers


Cherry Dilao - Volunteer


Barangay Administration


Barangay Council


Community Consultation


Barangay Leader

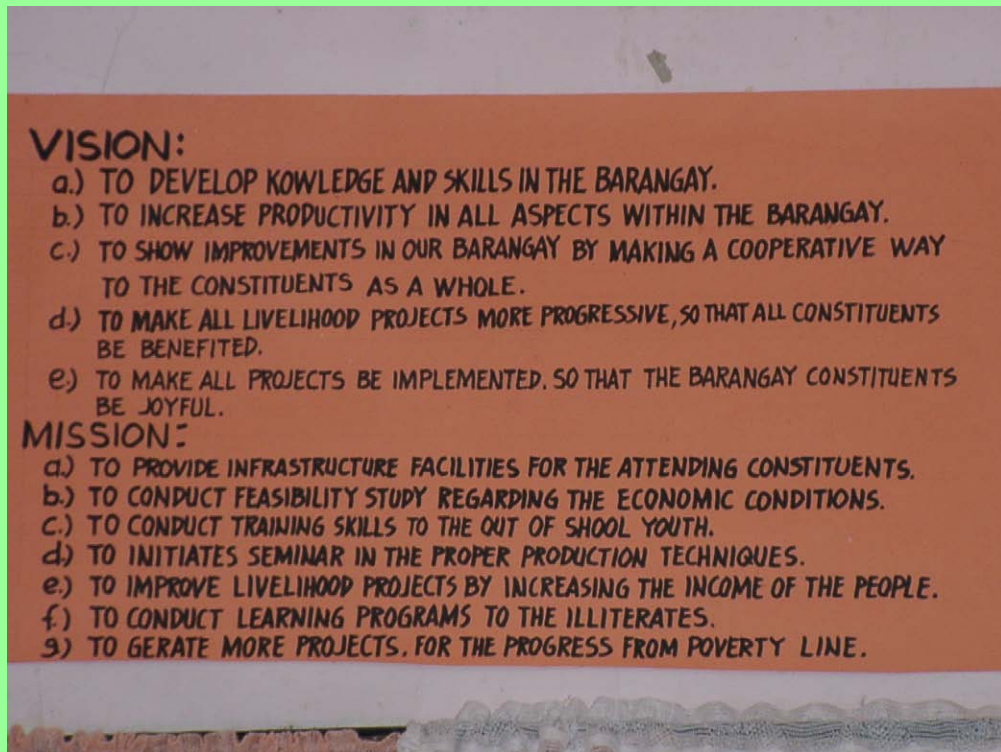Crab Fisherman          Resident          Community Consultation          Crab Fisheries

Jaliobong MCT

Photographs

**VISION:**
a.) TO DEVELOP KOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN THE BARANGAY.
b.) TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY IN ALL ASPECTS WITHIN THE BARANGAY.
c.) TO SHOW IMPROVEMENTS IN OUR BARANGAY BY MAKING A COOPERATIVE WAY
    TO THE CONSTITUENTS AS A WHOLE.
d.) TO MAKE ALL LIVELIHOOD PROJECTS MORE PROGRESSIVE, SO THAT ALL CONSTITUENTS
    BE BENEFITED.
e.) TO MAKE ALL PROJECTS BE IMPLEMENTED. SO THAT THE BARANGAY CONSTITUENTS
    BE JOYFUL.

**MISSION:**
a.) TO PROVIDE INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES FOR THE ATTENDING CONSTITUENTS.
b.) TO CONDUCT FEASIBILITY STUDY REGARDING THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS.
c.) TO CONDUCT TRAINING SKILLS TO THE OUT OF SHOOL YOUTH.
d.) TO INITIATES SEMINAR IN THE PROPER PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES.
e.) TO IMPROVE LIVELIHOOD PROJECTS BY INCREASING THE INCOME OF THE PEOPLE.
f.) TO CONDUCT LEARNING PROGRAMS TO THE ILLITERATES.
g.) TO GERATE MORE PROJECTS. FOR THE PROGRESS FROM POVERTY LINE.

**Jaliobong MCT Mission**

**Photographs**

**School Lesson**

**New Building**

Photographs

**Community Meeting**

Photographs

**Computer Lesson**

**Local Transportation**
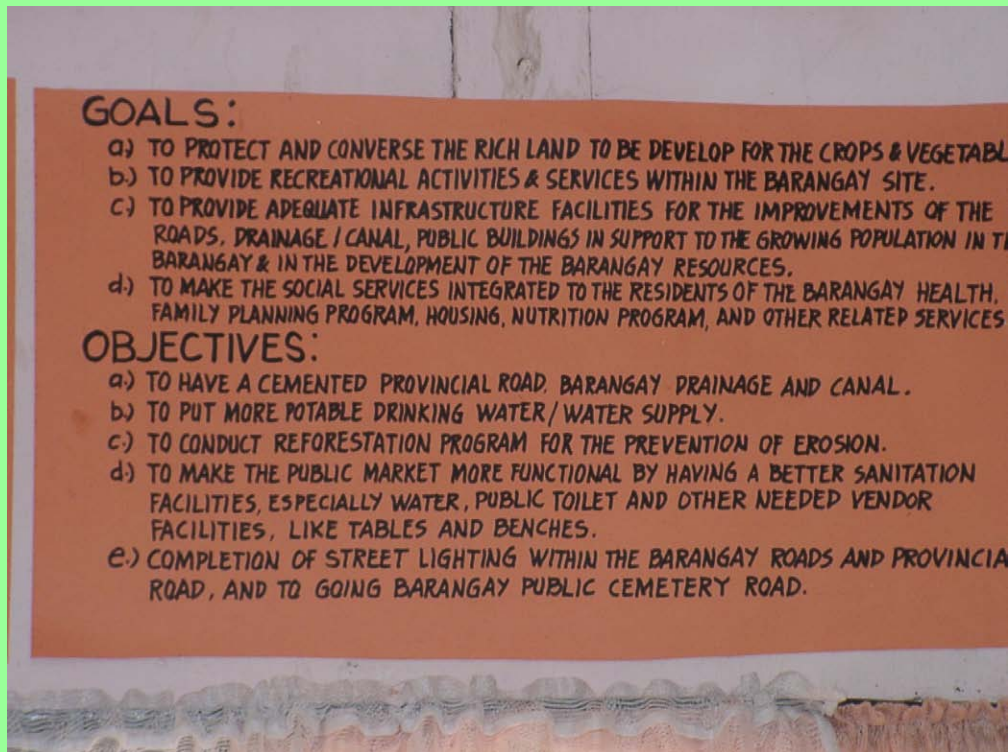
**Barangay Council Goals**

**Photographs**

**Barangay Hall/MCT**

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**Project Team Members**

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**Barangay Captain**

**Photographs**

**Local Institute**

Photographs

Maguinda

Photographs

**Maguinda MCT**

**Photographs**

**VIP Client**


**Photographs**

Sonia - Volunteer

Photographs

**Community Discussion**

**Photographs**

**School Teachers**

Local Transportation

Photographs

Sonia's Mum

Photographs

**Dodong's and his Ducks**

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Dodong's House

Photographs

MCT

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**Downtown**

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**MCT Interior**

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**Market Produce**

Photographs

**Business Operation**

Photographs

**Farmers' Supplies**

Photographs

MCT

**Barangay Leader**

**Volunteers**

Photographs

**Cherry Dilao - Volunteer**

**Barangay Administration**

**Barangay Council**

<span style="color:blue">**Photographs**</span>

**Community Consultation**

Photographs

**Barangay Leader**

**Crab Fisherman**

Photographs

**Residents**

**Community Consultation**

**Crab Fisheries**

Photographs

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by
Roger Harris

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# MINDANAO
## Multipurpose Telecentre Sites

PCHRD

# Pilot Multipurpose Community Telecentres in Selected Barangays in the Philippines

A project by the Philippine Council for Health and Research Development (PCHRD) of the Department of Science and Technology

An evaluation and reporting on the implementation process and results of the Multipurpose Community Telecentres Project in Northern Mindanao.

## Acknowledgements

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