



PAN AMERICAS PROSPECTUS 2006 - 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regional Consultation of the Pan Américas Program/ IDRC
Montevideo, November 29th – 30th, 2005

LAC's development challenges and ICTs

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are currently facing a changing socio-economic environment, within which, new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are being increasingly addressed as a transversal theme towards the achievement of development goals.

New approaches at the national and regional levels are emerging as a way to tackle key development priorities such as poverty alleviation, education and health improvement, and within them, ICT are seen as key tools to provide innovative solutions to traditional problems.

Recent indicators in the region signal increased exports, promising economic growth, and the wider spread of technology adoption across the region. There are, however, pressing issues that remain at the core of regional developmental concerns. The increasing inequality, the slow pace of job creation, and the fragility of democratic institutions are all factors that undermine the prospects of sustained economic growth and erode any improvement in basic human development indicators.

This set of circumstances evidence that part of the region's development challenge consists in the creation of jobs that could lead to the strengthening of national economies, contributing to sustainable social and political stability in LAC.

In the last decade the use of ICT has been transforming national economies and societies, leading to what is currently known as the *e-Economy*. The growing importance of the creation, use and equitable access to local knowledge has shown that regional economies are increasingly relying on a wider variety of technology options, human resource capacities (skills, know-how and entrepreneurship), as well as on networking, partnerships and collaboration, in order to stir up national development.

In order to respond and contribute to the wide range of regional needs and priorities, Pan Americas aims to support applied research on innovative approaches to social and economic equity through the use of ICTs in LAC. The creation of new and relevant local knowledge should help the region to reap the benefits from the information economy and consolidate itself as a knowledge-based society.

In accordance with this, its programmatic priorities consist on strengthening the capacity of LAC communities to benefit from the new social and economic systems in

¹ Relative stability as the region has seen moments of crisis and political unrest in countries such as Bolivia and Ecuador.

² Pan Americas Partners Consultation will take place November 29-30, 2005 in Montevideo, Uruguay, gathering regional ICT practitioners from the private, government, non-governmental and academic sectors. In preparation for this meeting, four thematic papers were commissioned to LAC experts on the issues of education, e-government, SMEs, and e-health.

which ICT have a considerable influence, by supporting a set of strategic projects and initiatives on three main themes: e-economy; e-enablers and e-citizenship.

Tentative Areas of Research Focus

In order to better reflect the links between Pan Americas programming and the goal of contributing towards poverty reduction in LAC, while helping the region to consolidate itself as a knowledge-based society, the following thematic matrix was designed:

<div><div>Main Themes</div><div>Key Research Components</div></div>	e-Economy	e-Enablers	e-Citizenship
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ICTs in the informal economy• SMEs, e-commerce and employment• IP Rights & Public Goods• Youth, digital and creative industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The e-Cognitive Divide• Education and skills for the e-economy• e-Health, environment, and local development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• e-Government for all: supply and access• Open Government: transparency and accountability• Citizen participation• & Privacy
Technology and Policy Innovation/ Gender Equity			
KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY			

The three core themes proposed in this prospectus (e-economy, e-enablers and e-citizenship) were identified as a way of responding to the region's developmental challenges and current ICT context, while addressing the recommendations of Pan Americas' external reviewers³ in regards with the need for a clear focus on the issue of poverty reduction. They share as a common ground the need to respond and contribute to the achievement of social and economic equity in the region, through the use of ICT related tools and strategies.

While working on these main themes, Pan Americas will continue to tackle a series of

³ From July 2004 until June 2005, a team of external evaluators conducted a review of the ICT4D Program Area with the main objective of assessing its performance, including that of Pan Americas as a Corporate Project. The importance of this review resides in its contribution to accountability, guidance for future programming and learning for improvement. In addition to recognizing the value and relevance of Pan Americas programming, it was suggested the need to clearly identify and focus on Pan Americas' value added/distinctive features, as well as on the type of project partners of the Corporate Project, and the best ways to accumulate corporate learning in order to continue being a leading organization in ICT4D research in LAC.

key research components (knowledge networks, capacity building, gender equity, evaluation and learning, dissemination of research findings and policy engagement), as well as addressing the role of *Technology and Policy Innovation* as transversal themes for all projects supported in the 2006-2010 Prospectus period.

a) e-Economy

The e-economy⁴, a concept that refers in the broad sense to the use of ICTs for product and process innovation across all sectors of the economy, has emerged in the last decade as the primary engine of productivity and growth for the global economy. Within this context, Pan Americas recognizes that LAC's transition towards fully ICT-enabled economies is a complex challenge that involves narrowing the innovation and productivity gaps that exist within and between countries of the region by adopting and adapting ICTs to match the productivity performance in key industrial sectors, as well as the implementation of proficient performances in the delivery of health services and education⁵.

Programming in this area will be focused on the increasing informal economy of urban and periurban environments in the region, addressing the use of ICT by small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs); the new forms of work and employment made available through the use of ICT; digital and creative industries; regional public goods and other emerging models of ownership and production (innovations in technologies, methods and policies).

b) e-Enablers

Health and education are universally recognized as issues that lay at the core of a nation's development and socio-political and economic stability. Consequently, they have also constituted two of the main areas in which ICT projects and strategies have been directed towards during the last decade, and areas in which ICT interventions have the potential of producing a direct impact in local development and national growth.

As part of this thematic axis, Pan Americas seeks to foster research that explores the ways in which the innovative implementation, use and appropriation of ICTs in areas of education and health can contribute to empower vulnerable and marginalized communities in LAC, thus having a positive, leveling effect, in regional equity. Under this theme, the program will also address specific innovations in technologies and new understandings of key areas of policy intervention.

c) e-Citizenship

⁴E-economy is also defined as the dynamic system of interactions between the nation's citizens, the business and the government that capitalize upon online technology to achieve a social or economic good. International e-Economy Benchmarking.- The World's Most Effective Policies for e-Economy, London, November 2002. ([http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/e-envoy/reports-benchmarking2002/\\$file/whole_report.pdf](http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/e-envoy/reports-benchmarking2002/$file/whole_report.pdf)).

⁵ <http://www.e-economy.ca/epic/internet/inec2ee-ceace.nsf/en/nl00052e.html>

Citizenship, understood as an overarching term that refers to online participation in society and participation in an online society⁶, is qualitatively different from traditional subjects. It entails action, participation, expressing a view, affecting an outcome, its end result and aim is citizens' empowerment. Under this theme, Pan Americas' activities will aim at promoting the establishment of interactive citizens' participation/consultation processes to promote the access to public information, and the democratic use of the Internet and other technologies to effectively integrate citizens in governance processes. It will also look into ICT innovations that may improve the achievement of a holistic understanding of e-Citizenship, as well as the assessment of policies beneficial for vulnerable populations and communities.

d) Transversal Issues

Technology and Policy Innovation

The digital environment is characterized by multiple and varied technology developments, that are constantly challenging the existing policies and regulations that relate to the ICT field. As technology innovations emerge having an impact in the way education, health, entrepreneurship and government services are perceived and implemented in the region, ICT policy directions and strategies are increasingly needed to reflect, respond and prepare for these and upcoming developments.

Innovations at both the technology and the policy levels need to be transversally fostered, in order to ensure that vulnerable and marginalized groups at the bottom of the pyramid can effectively benefit from the potential of the information society, from access to use and appropriation of these tools in their local contexts. Applied research initiatives should recognize the importance of new and best practices in content creation, delivery, technical solutions, developments, products and creative thinking on ICT4D in LAC.

Gender Equity

Any approach to the issue of women and ICTs must begin by recognizing that the information economy does not affect men and women in the same way. The gendered nature of the social, economic, policy and technology systems, as well as the roles and responsibilities that women and men have according to a socially defined gender division of labour are important determinants of a gender approach to ICTs. These different roles are also reflected in the diverging use and response that women and men face in accessing and appropriating new technologies. Consequently, Pan Americas will tackle gender equity as a transversal theme in its programming.

Programming: Objectives and Expected Outputs

With the aim of continuing to support applied research on the ICT issues and priorities mentioned above, Pan Americas will work on the following key specific objectives:

1. To support applied research in the areas of *e-economy*, *e-enablers* and *e-*

⁶ http://www.ictadvice.org.uk/index.php?section=tl&catcode=as_cu_pr_sub_02&rid=18

citizenship, in order to promote the region's transformation into a knowledge-based society while addressing topics relevant to social and economic equity.

2. To address the region's developmental challenges by fostering the use and appropriation of ICT as tools to reduce poverty, create capacities and employment, integrate youth, and strengthen democratic governance.
3. To continue supporting a holistic approach to development by effectively integrating evaluation and learning, gender equity, South-South and South-North exchanges, and dissemination of research results.
4. To help consolidate solid ICT initiatives and processes, to contribute to informed and sound public policy decisions and a better understanding of the impact of ICT in the region.

In order to achieve this outcome, Pan Americas will support during this programming cycle the following key **outputs**:

- a. A set of **projects focused on key research questions** on the following ICT4D areas: *e- economy*, *e-enablers* and *e-citizenship*, in order to improve the region's understanding and ability to rip the benefits of the information society.
- b. **Locally-produced content and research products** (reports, documents, books, multimedia, dissemination materials, among others) that can contribute to better informed ICT multi-sectorial stakeholders, practitioners and policy makers in LAC.
- c. The **consolidation of new networks** of South-South and South-North researchers and practitioners (from the public and private sectors, CSOs and academia) to promote knowledge exchange, policy frameworks, and new implementation processes based on collaborative approaches and expert's interaction.

In accordance to the strategic directions of the ICT4D Program Area⁷, Pan Americas will continue to strengthen regional networks of ICT practitioners, fostering their links and interaction with other sub-regional and global networks.

- d. Fostering **policy engagement** at the local and national levels through the effective dissemination of research findings, in order to contribute to informed decision-making processes.
- e. **Evaluations, case studies and reports** to analyze the results and impact

⁷ ``As indicated in all of the external evaluations, ICT4D programs have moved from demonstration technology projects to establishing regional networks of applied researchers. (...). We also want the regional networks we support to be able to behave globally (...). With the other Program Areas at IDRC, ICT4D wants to get much better at helping our regional networks link, collaborate and share ideas. Ibid.

of initiatives that have been implemented on Pan Americas strategic themes, as well as other activities related to past and ongoing programming (such as networking, capacity building, gender equity, and dissemination of research results)

- f. Workshops, regional and international forums, virtual and face-to-face meetings to present, discuss and further disseminate research results on relevant ICT issues in LAC.

Mechanisms to contribute to ICT4D in LAC

Pan Americas learning to date suggests that the Corporate Project approach has potential to continue contributing to ICT4D applied research in the region through the following mechanisms:

a. Using Innovative Research as an Engine for Change

By interacting closely with an expanding range of regional ICT stakeholders and practitioners, Pan Americas will continue to identify and address issues and priorities that are central to the countries' economic and social development. Innovative areas of research are increasingly being prioritized in an effort to explore new solutions and approaches to bridge the digital gap and effectively impact the quality of life in the region. Though its support to applied research, Pan Americas strives to build links between strengthened human capital and skills, and the use and appropriation of new technologies for social insertion, in order to contribute to the region's economic growth and competitiveness.

b. Using Research for Policy Engagement

IDRC has put special attention in exploring *how social sciences research is used by policy makers*.

In order to reach this end, research is frequently combined with knowledge generation and a deliberate action to influence the behaviour of those in charge of making policy decisions. There is a recognised need to raise the capacity of developing countries to use science and technology to generate knowledge, while at the same time managing processes across social groups, policy-making networks, and communities at large.

Within this context, Pan Americas will continue supporting the systematization of existing knowledge, experience and expertise, and its transformation into information packages to be disseminated and used by ICT stakeholders and entities involved in policy-making processes in the region.

c. Using research to Evaluate and Learn

The goal of using research to evaluate and learn is closely linked with IDRC's corporate goals, including the implementation of monitoring and evaluation methodologies for the improvement of project and organizational planning and delivery, enhancing collaboration and participation of relevant stakeholders in project implementation, and also a means to learn from both successes and mistakes in order to change the course of present and future actions. Within Pan Americas' 2006-2010

programmatic strategy, evaluation mechanisms will continue to play an essential learning role. Evaluation will be considered as a key tool for planning and management, capacity building, and to assess the use and impact of research for development in LAC.

Partnership Strategy

During the 2005-2010 Prospectus period, Pan Americas will seek to further the consolidation of new and ongoing partnerships to encourage joint learning, foster innovative research and leverage funding for ICT4D initiatives in LAC. These partnerships include the Donor's Community (support to identify thematic niches and areas for future action, as well as the joint funding of initiatives, strengthening existing alliances with regional organizations and articulating with new ones, including private sector donors), Canadian Partnerships/ North-South collaboration (leveraging additional Canadian resources for research for development, by creating, reinforcing, funding and participating in partnerships between Canadian institutions and institutions in the developing world⁸), as well as internal partnering with other IDRC Programs and Initiatives (including Telecentres.org program at IDRC, and as joint support to global initiatives such as ORBICOM and GKP).

⁸ IDRC Corporate Strategy 2005-2010, Ottawa, 2005 pg 16. www.idrc.ca