



Communications Cooperative International

PROJECT PROFILES

AFRICA¹

- **ICT Cooperative Development, Malawi
2008 - Ongoing**

This project is being conducted in collaboration with USAID/Malawi and leaders of the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM), the umbrella organization for 40 smallholder farmers associations with a membership of over 100,000. CCI is working with NASFAM to organize and set up an information and communications technology (ICT) cooperative for six smallholder farmers associations in Northern Malawi. Among other things, the cooperative will offer members and users access to a dedicated portal containing information about agricultural markets, health and HIV/AIDS, agricultural inputs and farm management. The portal utilizes a flexible technology platform and can be accessed by Internet or mobile phone, and allows for the broadcast of information through collaborating radio stations. Once established in Northern Malawi, the ICT cooperative concept will be replicated within the Chinyanja Triangle formed by the border areas of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia.

- **Mobile Telephony and Access in Poor, Rural Areas, Ethiopia and South Africa
2007 - 2009**

With two collaborating partners – NEXUS Research Co-operative, headquartered in Dublin, Ireland; and Research ICT Africa!, headquartered at the EDGE Institute in Johannesburg, South Africa – CCI conducted an empirical study on information and communications technology (ICT) usage in Ethiopia and South Africa. The project incorporated a controlled study component and was funded by USAID's Cooperative Development Program. Broadly stated, it assessed the differential economic, social and other impacts of mobile phone strategies and government policy on different socio-economic groups within relatively poor rural and peri-urban communities, with a view to illuminating how such impacts would be affected by reducing costs of access to mobile phone (or similar) services. Project documents can be viewed at <http://www.cci.coop/research.html>.

- **ICT Cooperative Development and Policy Innovation, Ethiopia
2004 - Ongoing**

With funding from USAID/EGAT and working with the World Bank and USAID/ Ethiopia, CCI is playing a key role in promoting down-stream liberalization of the telecommunications sector and in facilitating private sector involvement in the information and communications

¹ Prior to January 1, 2007, the listed activities were managed and implemented by former International Program staff of NTCA (National Telecommunications Cooperative Association), which spun off as CCI when NTCA discontinued its international development activities.

technology (ICT) sector. We guided the development of the first ICT Cooperative in Ethiopia, the Butajira ICT Cooperative. Critical to this achievement was securing the cooperation of key stakeholders, in particular the incumbent provider, the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation (ETC); the regulator, the Ethiopian Telecommunication Agency (ETA); the Federal Cooperative Agency (FCA); and the Ministry of Capacity Building. More than 25 community groups, women's cooperatives, farmers and other civic and cooperative organizations joined forces in support of this rural connectivity initiative, designed to provide access to information and communications technology services to more than 100 communities and about 250,000 people in a underserved area about 80 miles from Addis Ababa.

Preparatory to establishing the cooperative, CCI staff and consultants conducted two major studies, the "ICT Pre-Appraisal Assessment of Community Access Initiative" and "Community-Based Telecommunications Cooperative Assessment & Site Selection." The second assessment culminated in a stakeholders' workshop that concluded by ratifying the selection of four pilot sites for the development of ICT cooperatives (Butajira being the first).

Extensive capacity building support and consulting services have been provided to ETA and ETC on issues such as technology options, universal access and principles of regulation and competition in a converged environment; to FCA on issues relating to establishing and registering ICT cooperatives in the country; and to the Butajira community on issues of organization, business planning, membership, governance, operations and more. These efforts continue.

- **Strengthening West African Telecommunications Regulators Assembly
2005 – 2009**

Telecommunications regulators from member states of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), supported by USAID's West Africa Regional Program, the World Bank and its Public Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility, launched the West African Telecommunication Regulators Assembly (WATRA) to facilitate harmonization of telecommunication sector policies, and to foster an integrated regional telecommunications market across the ECOWAS region. Supported by USAID/EGAT, CCI assisted WATRA in strengthening its institutional capacity to effectively and efficiently perform its role as the regional telecommunications regulatory organization, and to carry out its objectives of regional telecom markets integration through activities in accord with the objectives of the West African market integration goals of USAID.

- **Support to Digital Bridge Institute, Nigeria
2004 - 2008**

The Digital Bridge Institute (DBI) is a technology training institute created by the Nigerian Communications Commission. With funding from USAID, CCI provided technical assistance in furtherance of DBI's human resource development and capacity-building missions in the public and private sectors. Work with DBI encompassed assistance to plan expansion of DBI's operations to two satellite campuses, among other key objectives.

- **Support to NetPost, Nigeria**

- 2004 - 2008**

- Under a grant from USAID's Last Mile Initiative/EGAT, CCI provided management support and technical assistance to develop an investment-grade business plan, and initiated project plans for the first rural NetPost facility, located in the Nigerian state of Nasarawa. NetPost is a joint venture partnership between the Nigerian Postal Services Limited – NIPOST (the state-owned postal service agency) and two private sector companies. Its mission is to establish modern communications connectivity between post offices across the country and help enable Nigerians to bridge the digital divide by providing greater and more affordable access to the Internet and nationwide communication services. The first rural NetPost, located Nasarawa State, became operational in fall of 2005 and started generating a profit within six months of start-up. Main features of NetPost include a cybercafé, a phone center, a business center, and computer and Internet training center, as well as mini-commercial banking services.

- **Universal Access Policy, Nigeria**

- 2000 – 2008**

- We have played a key role in establishing universal access policies and programs in Nigeria since that country's return to democratic rule in 2000, starting with an assessment of rural telecommunications needs and resources in 15 states representing the principal geographic regions of Nigeria. The assessment, funded by USAID's Leland Initiative, was conducted in partnership with a national Nigerian non-governmental organization and eight community-based organizations. The resulting report was used to recommend a comprehensive telecommunications strategy for Nigeria's rural and underserved areas. We developed a market-oriented approach that facilitated public-private partnerships and incorporated public participation at all levels. Specific recommendations were also offered on policy, financing options, management structures, operational and technical design and evaluation mechanisms. The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) incorporated this advice into the telecommunications sector reform program being undertaken jointly with Nigeria's Bureau of Private Enterprises and supported by the World Bank.

We were subsequently awarded an NCC contract to continue working on rural telecom and universal access for Nigeria. This project established the foundation for the development of pilot rural telecom projects and the adoption of a national policy on universal access. In July 2003, President Olusegan Obasanjo signed into law Nigeria's new Communications Bill, enacting a universal access provision that adopted nearly all of our principal recommendations, including the establishment of a universal service fund, the utilization of an independent private-sector fund manager, and provisions enabling community-based organizations (such as cooperatives) to enter the market to provide telecommunications services.

In August 2005, the NCC passed a seminal order creating a regulatory framework for licensing cooperatives and other community-based ICT providers. The order incorporated extensive recommendations by CCI staff. It established a new category of local exchange operators know as "Rural Telecommunications Service Providers" (RTSPs) and established a staff unit within the NCC to implement the RTSP program and, in time, to provide technical

assistance to communities and entrepreneurs wishing to establish cooperatives and community-based systems.

CCI has provided ongoing technical assistance to the Nigerian Communications Commission; and to the Nigerian Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) in the areas of project identification, design and implementation. Activities pursued in tandem with the USPF are envisioned to include at least one major project to expand ICT access to unserved and underserved areas through community action and private sector participation.

- **Mpeko-Dumrana Community Health and Development Center, South Africa
2002 – 2006**

With funding from Ford Foundation and USAID, and in partnership with local communities, the Diocese of St. John's (now Mthatha) of the Anglican Church in South Africa and the University of Transkei (now Walter Sisulu University), we helped establish the Mpeko-Dumrana Community Health and Development Center in a severely impoverished area of South Africa's rural Eastern Cape Province. This is an ICT-based grassroots pilot that delivers a new set of community resources to strengthen local leadership, build skills, and facilitate learning. The Center is the focus of community programs to provide peer-group education aimed at reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS, relieving stigma for the afflicted, improving palliative techniques and providing other forms of training and support for home health care workers. An innovative approach of the project is the development and use of a multimedia HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment curriculum, which enhances peer education and outreach efforts. Delivered via PC, the curriculum is available in the local language (Xhosa) and is tailored to serve illiterate and semi-literate individuals.

- **Community Based Telecommunications Assessment, South Africa
2004**

Substantial technical assistance was contributed in support of a project initiated by the Universal Service Agency (USA) to develop a telecom cooperative in the Sekhukhune region. The vision was the delivery of wireless voice and data within a footprint that would eventually cover the entire Sekhukhune region, both urban and rural, through a cooperative that would deliver broadband connectivity to telecenters, libraries, municipal offices, hospitals, clinics and other public installations. Following months of pre-assessment discussions with the various stakeholders, staff traveled to Sekhukhune to conduct a field assessment (funded by the Leland initiative), only to discover that the area had far more in the way of telecom infrastructure than residents had the capacity to utilize. USA consequently shelved the project.

- **Community Based Telecommunications Assessment, Southern Sudan
2003**

At the request of the government of Southern Sudan (SPLM), CCI staff made field visits to several sites in Southern Sudan as part of a USAID-funded Overseas Cooperative Development Council assessment of telecommunications and information technology development needs and priorities of the region in the post-conflict period following over two decades of civil war. Sites visited included Lobone, Yei, Maridi and Yambio in the

Equatoria region, and Panyagor and Rumbek in the Jonglei and Lakes regions, respectively. Where telecom or ICT facilities did exist, they were documented and photographed to the extent possible. CCI staff determined other criteria such as the type, age, condition or fitness for rehabilitation of equipment. The results of these determinations were presented to the USAID Southern Sudan Task Force, the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance.

Information and Communications Technology Assessment, Uganda 2001

This work was conducted as subcontractor to the CARANA Corporation and as part of USAID/Uganda's effort to develop a six-year integrated strategic plan incorporating ways to better integrate ICT into three strategic objectives: environmentally sustainable and diversified economic growth; improved impact of selected sustainable social sector services; and improved democratic governance. Following extensive interviews with a broad range of Ugandan stakeholders and comprehensive review studies of Uganda's ICT sector, a report was produced addressing ways to expand access to ICTs in the country. The report included a detailed analysis of Uganda's ICT sector and its implications for areas of interest to USAID/Uganda; general principles and guidelines for use by USAID/Uganda staff in assessing ICT-related projects; and specific program recommendations for the Mission.

EASTERN EUROPE

◦ **ICT Cooperative Development, Albania 2002 – 2009**

With USAID funding and in collaboration with Land O'Lakes, in late 2004 CCI staff established a pilot TeleCoop in Krutje, a low-income agricultural community of approximately 11,000 inhabitants. The Krutje TeleCoop, formed under Albanian law as a community-owned ICT business center, extends ICT access, training and business development and support services using satellite Internet connection, computers, public telephones, photocopier, printer and fax machine. We assisted in the design and organization of the TeleCoop, and provided extensive technical assistance, training and capacity building.

◦ **Regulatory Assessment, Albania 2003**

Following a desk study of available data, CCI conducted the in-county component of a regulatory assessment in March 2003. We interviewed senior government officials in the Telecommunications Regulatory Entity (TRE) and the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications, representatives of a national mobile provider and independent rural telecom service providers. Primary source documents (chiefly regulatory) were obtained, translated into English, and analyzed. The draft assessment report, including recommendations to the government, was sent to key telecom sector officials for their review and comments prior to further dissemination. The final report, entitled *Albania: Telecom Regulation and Private Sector Investment in Rural Access*, was published in August 2003. It explores the impact of key laws and regulations on private sector investment in

telecommunications and ICTs in rural areas, and considers the regulatory environment for creating community telecenters and cooperatives to help achieve national universal service goals. As a result of our recommendations, the regulator eliminated the policy of requiring telecenters to be licensed.

- **Establishing Rural Telephone Companies, Poland, 1990 - 1996**

With USAID funding and in collaboration with independent telecommunications service providers throughout the US, we worked to establish six locally owned rural telecom systems in the early to mid 1990's in underserved rural areas of Poland. Two were organized as member-owned cooperatives, and four as investor-owned entities. These were the first independent telecommunications providers in all of Eastern Europe. They set the standards that eventually enabled 44 independent telephone companies to be established in Poland.

- **Telecommunications Cooperative Development Case Study, Poland, 2003**

The WIST Telecommunications Cooperative and the Tyczyn Telecommunications Cooperative were launched with our support in southeastern Poland in 1991 and 1992, respectively. They quickly become successful, self-sustaining businesses that continue to grow in service provision and profitability. In 2003 CCI staff conducted a comprehensive organizational, business and financial analysis of each of the cooperatives to capture, among other things, the projects' impact and lessons learned over their first 10 years of operation. The final report, entitled *Cooperative Development Case Studies: WIST and Tyczyn Telecommunications Cooperatives, Poland* describes the unprecedented salience the cooperatives provide to their members, communities and businesses.

- **Network of Business Internet Centers, Ukraine 2001 - 2005**

Under a cooperative agreement with the USAID Regional Mission for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, CCI staff worked with Ukrainian entrepreneurs to establish a network of seven community-based business Internet centers (BICs) in underserved Ukrainian communities. The BICs support the growth of SMEs in small towns and rural areas of Ukraine by expanding their access to modern technologies and business expertise through the BIC network. All seven Business Internet Centers (BICs) covered their operating costs within 18 months of start-up, demonstrating the effectiveness of ICT-based SME-support businesses as sustainable tools for achieving economic and social development goals. Each BIC provides a full portfolio of business services including business and legal consulting and training, virtual office support and access to ICT services. In effect, these businesses act as business incubators, supporting the growth of SMEs by providing a full range of fee-based services. Over 50,000 clients were served by the BICs in the first three years of the project, including microenterprise and SME owners, large corporations, government offices (outsourcing functions to the BICs), students and NGOs, with two of the BICs adding ISP services delivery to their portfolio of business services. Hundreds of new jobs were created and over 3,000 people were trained, a third of whom found work in the area trained. As well, the project led to the formation of the "All-Ukrainian Association of Business Internet Centers,"

intended to support the BICs and others serving the rural SME market beyond the project's time frame.

GLOBAL

- **Training for Telecommunication Regulators, Officials and Stakeholders
2000 – 2006**

Within the US and with support from the US Department of State and USAID, CCI staff explored the telecom cooperative model with groups of visiting telecommunications regulators from around the world. Training modules focusing on rural regulatory and telecommunications policies and technologies were developed and presented. Issues related to the legal and regulatory climate for ICTs were addressed, as well as community-owned telecommunications systems, universal service and universal access. Attendees at these events included representatives from Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, Honk Kong, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Moldova, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

CCI staff also conducted workshops and conferences in Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa and Ukraine on telecommunications policy and regulation, particularly as these relate to ICT cooperatives and community-based systems; and how underserved areas could be served via new technologies that can be deployed at the community level. These events engaged a wide variety of private and public telecom sector stakeholders in exploring prevailing policies and possible alternative approaches to expanding access to underserved areas.

- **World Bank Telecenter Study
2000**

With funds from the Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF), CCI with then-NTCA staff designed, researched and wrote a seminal study laying out for government regulators and international donors what needs to be done to expand private sector involvement in the development of sustainable ICT telecenters. The authors addressed implementation issues and studied ways to increase public-private sector linkages while giving policymakers a framework to consider the appropriateness of telecenters as a means toward universal service/access. The study was published in July 2000 and entitled, *Initial Lessons Learned About Private Sector Participation in Telecenter Development: A Guide for Policy Makers in Developing Appropriate Regulatory Frameworks*.