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Meeting real information needs through telecentres

Telecentres are seen as a means of providing affordable access to the Internet for the poor. But what would the poor do with access to the Internet? Community consultation exercises recently carried out by Youth Alive in Soweto, South Africa, and Armonia in Mexico City, tried to gain an understanding of what young people really need.

Both of these partners have worked in areas of acute need and high risk over a long time, and have excellent links with young people through work, which includes youth clubs (with activities covering a broad range of life issues, such as HIV/AIDS) and micro-enterprise development.

Although some young people in Soweto had used the Internet, the only location they could remember was the Britney Spears website. When questioned further, they recognised that Britney would not be much help in solving their problems! Both consultations came up with similar priority needs:

- Employment; awareness of opportunities and training
- Education; equal opportunity for education

In Mexico, however, the high proportion of migrant workers gave rise to a further need:

- Communication; frequent cost-effective contact with dispersed family.

The consultations were part of the initial phase of a DFID funded project by Big World and Gamos to develop an innovative approach to the design of telecentres. In response to these needs, telecentres will include library resources, learning programmes, careers advice, and a design studio.

The telecentres will be content- rather than technology-led, with a focus on publishing local content, and will contribute to ongoing, local projects. Consequently both telecentres in Soweto and Mexico City are being set up, not so much to provide global access, but to provide locally relevant content.

Contact: www.gamos.demon.co.uk/Projects/Telecentres/telecentres.htm
Or nigel@gamos.demon.co.uk



Young people "voting" for priorities (Mexico).

World Bank launches cyber-gateway to development



The World Bank is launching its most ambitious information project to date: an Internet portal that aims to be a major entry-point to the Web's resources on development issues. But doubts abound about the initiative and the Bank itself appears clueless about how to maintain editorial independence. Will the Gateway end up as a gatekeeper?

By: Tanya Birkbeck, Gemini News

When it comes to the Internet and its role in promoting development, it seems that everyone is sure of the goal, but few agree on how to reach it.

The World Bank, the United Nations and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) all say they want to transform the lives of poor people. And, from the point of view of those working in computer and Internet-saturated developed nations, technology appears to be the obvious answer.

On 30 July, the World Bank launched its ambitious project, the Development Gateway (www.developmentgateway.org). The Gateway bills itself as a place where "worlds of knowledge meet" – an Internet portal designed to bring together "communities, organisations and individuals" in order to reduce poverty.

The launch comes on the heels of the latest UN Human Development Report (HDR), the annual publication documenting progress made by nations in improving their peoples' quality of life. The HDR for 2001 argues that "information and communications technology... can actually make major contributions to reducing world poverty."

That is also the premise that the Gateway is working upon. But it is no simple issue: The HDR notes that most of the potential benefits of technology actually bypass poor people, because of a lack of market demand and inadequate public funding; "Technology creators in the private sector respond to the needs of high-income consumers, rather than the needs of those who have little purchasing power."

With less than one-half of one per cent of sub-Saharan Africans and South Asians using the Internet, it's easy to see why critics doubt that a project such as the Development Gateway will succeed in bridging the digital and other divides between the wealthy nations of the North and the poor of the South. "Disembodied, globally stored information is not a development tool," argues Alex Wilks of the Bretton Woods Project, a Britain-based campaigning group that monitors the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Wilks, who has been following the evolution of the Development Gateway since the inception of the idea, has many reservations about the nature of the project.

"A lot of people will feel alienated by the way the site is set up," he says. Wilks is concerned that the structure of the Gateway Website is too hierarchical and that it will act as a filter rather than a disseminator of ideas. He compares the Gateway to an "Imperial gated community". "It's not your right to be there, it's only if you are granted access by the gatekeeper," he says.

Now in the hands of the World Bank, the Gateway will soon be passed over to what will be known as the Gateway Foundation. While the Foundation will technically be independent of the World Bank, seats on the board of directors can be bought – at a high price. Those wanting to be in on decision-making will be required to make a \$5 million contribution. Major corporations like Microsoft, IBM and America Online (AOL) have already had a hand in the project.

In the interest of avoiding a top-down structure, the Gateway will have locally-run 'country gateways', but, says Wilks, "some unpopular choices have been made" over who will be running the gateway in each country. And with some successful country-sites already up and running, such as Uruguay's www.uruguaytotal.com, Wilks argues that it may be counter-productive to put up more. "In the end it will just give more prominence to those who are already having no trouble making their voices heard" – thus widening the existing digital divide.

Constructive disengagement

Already, some organisations in developing countries are saying they will stay out of the Development Gateway. One such, the South Africa-based Association for Progressive Communications (an Internet site that focuses on the "environment, human rights, development and peace") has opted for what it calls "constructive disengagement" with the Gateway.

"We have talked with the World Bank about the initiative, and will continue to do so. We value any shared learning with development information initiatives," Anriette Esterhuysen, APC's executive director, told Gemini News Service. "However, we feel that the Development Gateway, to put it simply, is trying to be too much, for too many, at too great a cost."

In a policy paper, Esterhuysen notes that other examples of knowledge sharing over the Internet, such as the World Bank's Global Knowledge mailing list, launched in 1997, have been unable to shake off their identity as projects that are initiated and mediated by rich industrialised countries. "This is not to say that access to information and communications technologies are not an important tool for development," she writes. "But it does not create development."

Esterhuysen, like Wilks, worries that the Gateway may unintentionally end up competing with local initiatives. "The Internet is a very public space," adds Wilks. "For the World Bank it is a nightmare. Any small organisation can set up and publish. The World Bank has for a long time been very dominant, and now it's threatened by the pluralism."

Dr David Gauntlett, a lecturer in social communications at the University of Leeds in Britain, notes that it is the

very nature of the Internet to be pluralistic. "The World Bank may well want everyone interested in development issues to use their gateway. But the good thing about the Internet is that users can always look for, and usually find, alternatives," he says. "The web contains many voices and, whether the World Bank likes it or not, people will access those more challenging sites."

Gauntlett feels that whenever an institution with particular political or ideological leanings sets up a supposedly authoritative website, it should be clearly stated. In Development Gateway's prototype edition, only a tiny World Bank logo can be found – at the bottom of the main page.

Development Gateway's head of communications, Connie Eysenck, says the whole debate over the Bank project has been blown out of proportion. She says this month's launch is part of an on-going phasing-in process.

And John Garrison, Gateway's head of Civil Society, adds that the Development Gateway "doesn't want to be a super gateway in which everyone has to come to our platform. We want to be one more portal... that hooks in

to existing portals." Neither does the Gateway want to put other portals out of business, says Garrison. He points to the independent Latin American portal ALOP (Latin American Association of Promotion Organizations): "They didn't want to work with Gateway because of the World Bank. We're very comfortable with that, and we have given them a grant," he says.

Garrison and Eysenck know the Gateway is challenged by many people's suspicions about the World Bank, especially in light of growing anti-globalisation protests. They claim that they are trying to make the institution more transparent in an effort to quell fears.

But when asked how the Development Gateway will maintain editorial independence when large corporations can buy a seat on the Gateway Foundation, Eysenck admits she does not have an answer.

"It hasn't been put in place yet," she says. "You have to see this very much as something that is being developed."

Contact: www.gemininewsservice.com

E-commerce and craft producers

While some companies and organisations have found new ways of working and conducting business to benefit from the Internet and e-commerce, many companies have found that e-commerce has failed to deliver in terms of actual sales of products or services. Even Internet companies such as Amazon have failed to make a profit yet. Gamos and Big World are working on a DFID funded project to investigate if and how craft producers in less developed countries can take advantage of the Internet and e-commerce to sell their goods.

ASHA means 'hope' in Sanskrit, and is the name given to an association that works with artisans and their families in India, extending medical help and education, and sharing craft skills.

HEED (Health, Education and Economic Development) also take a holistic approach to their work in Bangladesh, providing technical, financial, and training services to handicraft workers. Together, these organisations represent over 15,000 producers.

The focal point of the project is consultations with these partners' producer groups, and the first of these have now taken place. Both new business opportunities, and the enhancement of existing supply chains were considered:

- direct sales – there is potential to create new relationships with customers, but there are problems with dealing with small orders and delivery procedures.
- online catalogues – an obvious way to promote goods, but sales to individual customers are low, and as one artisan said "the Internet is good for showing goods to a customer, but you cannot touch them and feel their quality".
- design – design input from target markets is crucial for developing export products; online conference facilities could reduce the costs of consultancy advice.
- e-mail – can save time and costs, especially for international communication, but in many countries the infrastructure is unreliable or non-existent.

- multimedia – the plummeting cost of video equipment offers new opportunities for cost effective promotion.
- market information – the ability to see online craft goods and giftware for sale in target markets can provide a valuable input to the design of export products.

Based on this information, the project is now working on a number of options to enable craft producers to benefit from the new opportunities of e-commerce.

Contact: nigel@gamos.demon.co.uk or www.gamos.demon.co.uk/Projects/Ecommerce/eccommerce.htm



Artisan works on wooden box (India)
Photo: Mike Webb/Big World

NEWS FROM BDD PARTNERS

The Bridging the Digital Divide (BDD) programme is a package of cross-sectoral initiatives to address key barriers and opportunities for ICTs in achieving development targets. Funded by DFID and DGIS, the programme has been put together as a partnership with a number of key organisations – the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO), the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), OneWorld International, and the Panos Institute. Its five key areas of activity are:

- Strengthening local capacity in developing countries to address policy and regulatory environments.
- Support for a programme of demand led pilot projects, implemented as part of an ongoing series of stakeholder ICT roundtable processes in selected developing countries.
- Support for information inclusion for the poor through activities on community media and linking old and new ICTs.
- A strategic partnership with a global 'development' Internet partner.
- Knowledge and research activities in key areas to support the above programme.

NEWS FROM AMARC

Moebius Website

The Moebius_PlanetRadio website was launched by AMARC International early July 2001. The site is devoted to the promotion and support of the community radio movement in its struggle for the democratisation of communication.

The site contains the following sections:

- Community Radio: with individual web pages for each AMARC radio station member.
- Legislation: a database on the community radio legal situation in different countries.
- Radio Campaigns: a database of digital radio productions for each campaign.
- Training: manual on radio production, management, and new technologies.
- Solidarity Network: including the Solidarity Alert database.

The exchange website is also the front entrance for 2 sub-sites:

- PlanetRadio: the cyberspace studio of Moebius specialised on audio files (drama, music, sound effects, spots).
- Moebius Publications: a tool for community broadcasters to locally upload and classify radio programmes on the exchange website.

All reference information on the website is available in 4 languages: English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

Moebius_PlanetRadio began in 1999 as a pilot project in the Latin America and Caribbean Region, principally financed by IDRC Canada. The subsequent phases of PlanetRadio and general projects related to Moebius taking place in Africa during 2001 are financed by DFID.

Contact: <http://moebius.amarc.org> or lorencita.pinto@amarc.org

NEWS FROM ONEWORLD

OneWorld's digital divide campaign

Can the Internet be harnessed to provide benefits for all, or will it continue to be the preserve of a rich few? OneWorld's Digital Divide campaign tracks efforts to bridge the gap, and gives you a chance to get involved.

Communications technologies are playing an increasingly important role in economic development, education, health and governance.

The exclusion of billions who are poor, illiterate, rural or non-English speaking, from the evolving global information infrastructure has serious effects and the digital divide is fast becoming a critical issue for developing countries.

The Internet must be harnessed for sustainable development and access to the benefits of new technology should be for all. The rights to be informed and the means to communicate, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should be protected and extended with the Internet.

Anuradha Vittachi, Director of OneWorld International Foundation said: "We must ensure that the rhetoric of political leaders on digital divide is matched by responding to real needs and does not exacerbate global inequity. The challenge is to ensure both the growing worldwide digital divide and initiatives to address it do not compound the existing gap between rich and poor."

OneWorld's Digital Divide Campaign highlights the issues and challenges surrounding emerging technologies. It brings together material from OneWorld's online partnership of over 700 NGOs and international organisations such as UN agencies.

Contact: www.oneworld.net/campaigns/digitaldivide/

NEWS FROM IICD

Jamaican Internet music portal launched

In recent years the Internet and other information and communications technologies have had a significant impact on the music business. As a consequence, music production, promotion and distribution will never be the same.

To facilitate Jamaican and other Caribbean music producers and performers in their efforts to seize the opportunities offered by the Internet, Caribbean Entertainment Limited has spent the past three years developing a multifunctional Internet music portal. The Caribbeat music portal located at www.caribbeat.com.jm provides a number of facilities for music producers, performers, the music buying public, international record labels, distributors and concert promoters. The Caribbeat Internet portal was officially launched on Tuesday, June 26 at the Le Meridien Jamaica Pegasus.

The Honourable Junior Minister of Commerce and Technology, Mr. Campbell, opened the event. In his speech, the Minister indicated that: "It is special to present a project that has already produced impressive results, and not as so many times occurs, a project that is 'about to start'. This project is the first example of a serious effort to develop e-commerce in Jamaica. It serves as a catalyst to transform the Jamaican position in the global market." He furthermore told the audience: "This unique example of e-commerce in the music industry of Jamaica stimulates the government of Jamaica to be fast in providing the necessary support in legislation in the areas of facilitating in Jamaica transactions online, intellectual property rights, advanced provision of bandwidth and streaming technology, and a transparent system for disputes in e-commerce related issues."

The Ambassador of the Netherlands, Mr. Klipp, also addressed the public: "Caribbeat Entertainment Limited is one of the six projects that are currently in operation under the ICT for Development Programme developed

since 1998. The Programme is set up with support of the Government of Jamaica, the National Commission on Science and Technology and the International Institute for Communication and Development, funded through the Netherlands Government. The project is a good example of how ICT can assist countries as a tool for development. The Netherlands Embassy will continue its support to the Programme, particularly to promote the initiatives in the wider Caribbean region."

According to Caribbeat's Managing Director Lloyd Stanbury, the project will: "focus on the music of the English, French and Spanish speaking countries of the Caribbean, and will be projected to the world as 'The Online Source for Caribbean Music'. The portal services include 24/7 online radio, featuring genres such as Reggae, Dancehall, Salsa, Merengue, Soca and Zouk. Included in the portal is an online music store where CDs can be purchased. The website will also offer services to artists for the design and hosting of Artist Profile pages.

The Caribbeat project receives development support from the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) and Stichting Doen from the Netherlands. The EU-funded Trade Development Programme of the Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO) provided additional support.

Contact: www.iicd.org or skrogt@iicd.org
www.caribbeat.com.jm/

Multimedia in education

Can new multimedia technologies be used to improve education in rural areas in Africa? To answer this question IICD and SNV Niger sponsored a small research project to investigate the applicability of certain multimedia technologies in the education sector in Burkina Faso and Niger. A technical consultant from Noterik & Doonder did a field study to identify possible applications of these new technologies

Contact: www.iicd.org/research/ or tvonk@iicd.org

In the Pipeline

From development cooperation to e-development

On June 12, 2001, the Hivos symposium on ICTs in developing countries attracted more than 180 participants and 15 speakers from all over the world. All the reports and documents used during the symposium are available on the Hivos website in PDF format. The 'Naturalis Declaration', made after the symposium and presented to Eveline Herfkens, Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, can also be downloaded.

Contact: www.hivos.nl

SchoolNet Africa: An African education partnership

Starting in October 2001, SchoolNet Africa is an education initiative to promote learning and teaching through the use of Information and Communication

Technologies (ICTs) by supporting national schoolnet projects across Africa.

Supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)'s Acacia Programme and the Open Society Institute for Southern Africa, over the next three to five years, SchoolNet Africa will:

- Support the development of national school networks throughout Africa.
- Facilitate the provision of low cost, basic connectivity for schools across Africa.
- Facilitate capacity building and know-how for integrating ICTs in education.
- Support the development of local educational content on an ICT platform.
- Collect, develop and disseminate information and resources relevant to school networking.
- Provide strategic inputs into policy development in support of school networking.

- Increase awareness and understanding of the potential of ICTs in education.
- Monitor and evaluate the use of ICTs on school education in Africa.
- Build effective partnerships nationally, regionally and internationally.

During a three-year start-up phase (1 October 2001-30 September 2004) SchoolNet Africa will be set up as an independent institution, establish an appropriate governance structure and develop a programme containing the following elements:

1. *Digital Inclusion: Creating and African Learning Network* - Promotes access to computers and connectivity to the Internet among a targeted number of schools in a targeted number of countries.
2. *Building ICT Champions* - Promotes the development of leaders with the requisite skill set to champion the cause of promoting ICTs in school education in Africa. This programme will be conducted as a partnership between an African university and Harvard University.
3. *The Knowledge Warehouse Programme* - Promotes the creation and presentation of content and knowledge by learners and teachers that will reside in a central information repository.
4. *Research and Evaluation Programme* - Through research and evaluation, SchoolNet Africa will contribute to the understanding of school networking and the impact it has on education.

Contact: sisaacs@idrc.org.za or www.schoolnet africa.org

E-networking energy and the environment in Tanzania

With support from IICD and Hivos, the Tanzania Traditional Energy Development and Environment Organisation (TaTEDO) is using ICTs to improve communication and knowledge sharing among Tanzanian organisations working in this area.

SEE-Net

TaTEDO has linked up with several of its partner organisations to launch the Sustainable Energy and Environment Network of Tanzania or SEE-NET. More than just information exchange, the project seeks to strengthen local capacities, providing training in ICT skills to staff from partner organisations, building and hosting a common website, and supporting the acquisition of computer hardware.

In the past nine months, two E-Networking Training Seminars to introduce computer use and communication skills to staff from 15 partner organisations have been held. An E-network Coordinator (and webmaster) was appointed and a common website to share the information among partner organisations went live in January 2001. Various 'e-groups' have also been created to foster interactions along the different networks and sub-groups.

The easiness of communication has simplified the tedious work of organizing two meetings for two networks, one for the East African Energy Technology Development Network (EAETDN) and another for the Tanzania Solar Energy Association (TASEA). The partners are now collaborating together by preparing schemes of work, organising workshops and acquiring

the knowledge from each other through e-mails, using computers located in their offices or Internet cafes.

Contact: www.see-net.co.tz

ICTs at IDRC

In its programme direction 2000-2005, Canada's International Development Research Centre identifies ICTs as one of three principal programme areas. To help bridge the divide between the information rich and the information poor, IDRC is exploring how local groups and the research and development community can use ICTs to solve development problems.

Research priorities

IDRC pays particular attention to the different needs and approaches of the private and public sectors. Research efforts concentrate on the following:

- Equitable and sustainable access to information and to the use of ICTs so that all of society benefits; and
- Developments in the information economy. This includes the concerns of communities and businesses, e-commerce, and the local effects of global trade rules. Research will put added emphasis on youth employment and enterprises run by women.

At the community level in Asia, IDRC supports telecentres and other technologies that provide broader access to information. With its industrial base, educated citizenry, and current climate for change, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are in a strong position to benefit from ongoing "information activities." To support these activities, IDRC concentrates on research to strengthen policies that promote equitable access to ICTs and information. In sub-Saharan Africa, lack of access to ICTs at the community level demands action on many fronts, including improving policy development, strengthening infrastructure, and undertaking pilot testing of new ICT applications. IDRC emphasizes these issues in the context of how they affect rural and disadvantaged communities. IDRC also supports research on policy frameworks to encourage access to ICTs in North Africa and the Middle East and to investigate ways of increasing Arabic content on ICTs.

Contact: www.idrc.ca/cpf/33_information.html

KIT supports information projects

The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) in Amsterdam provides information to those working in the field of development. It particularly focuses on information concerning sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, gender and women, agriculture and the environment, and rural development. With funds from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs/DGIS, KIT also supports local information services in Africa and Asia.

Strengthening institutional capacity

The new policy began in 2000 and will run until December 2002. It has three core objectives:

- Strengthening institutional capacity for information services in developing countries.
- Information supply to specific target audiences in developing countries.
- Information supply to development professionals and information intermediaries in Western countries.

The main focus so far has been to identify and formulate

information projects together with partners in the developing world. Structural cooperation has been established with partners in the following areas:

- Improving access to health information in Zambia (School of Medicine of the University of Zambia);
- Networking for small-scale irrigation development for West and Central Africa (Association Regionale pour l'Irrigation et le Drainage en Afrique de l'Ouest et de Centre, Burkina Faso);
- An Agricultural Research Information System (Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences);
- Strengthening information and documentation services in Mali (Institut d'Economie Rurale);
- Strengthening the information and documentation services of the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre, Zimbabwe;
- International cooperation for the production of the Agriculture and Environment in Developing Regions CD-ROM, with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre;
- International cooperation for the production of the Sexual Health Exchange with the Southern African AIDS Information Dissemination Service, Zimbabwe; and
- Strategy development for a national information service with the National Agricultural Research Organisation, Uganda.

Contact: h.v.hartevelt@kit.nl or www.kit.nl/information_services/

Improving knowledge transfer

The Max Lock Centre has published an interesting set of guides that aim to improve the exchange and transfer of knowledge gathered and generated by researchers to benefit the urban poor in developing countries.

The Guides

The guides set out a series of strategies to improve research communication between the researcher and each of the principle interest groups in the urban development process. There is an emphasis on understanding how the poor in urban areas learn and communicate.

The guides are also aimed at improving the channels of communication and knowledge transfer between all interest groups to create active partnerships in decision-making for sustainable local urban development.

Guides in the series are:

1. *Identifying the users of development knowledge* - Outlines who the main interest groups are in local development that is intended to benefit the urban poor, and how these interest groups should be targeted.
2. *Targeting research knowledge to create partnerships in urban development* - Describes the roles of each of these groups in the development process and how communication channels can be improved, trust established and knowledge better shared to promote development partnerships.
3. *Understanding how the urban poor learn and communicate* - The learning and communication context of the urban poor and the strategies available to them through representative organisations and intermediaries, to improve their access to development knowledge.

4. *Intermediaries in knowledge transfer and exchange* - The specific communication roles of intermediaries in the knowledge transfer and exchange process and how they can be useful and applicable to all interest groups.

5. *Identifying the appropriate media for communication* - The appropriate choice of media for communication by each of the interest groups.

6. *Strategies for communication and knowledge sharing: the role of researchers* - Strategies for improving research communication from the point of view of researchers.

7. *Strategies for communication and knowledge sharing: the role of donors* - Strategies for improving research communication from the point of view of donor organisations.

8. *Strategies for communication and knowledge sharing: the role of local intermediaries* - Strategies for improving research communication from the point of view of local intermediaries.

Contact: www.wmin.ac.uk/builtenv/maxlock/KTweb/KTFindex.htm

Transform the digital divide into online opportunities

PEOPLink is a non-profit organisation that trains and equips grassroots artisans to use digital cameras and the Internet to market their crafts while showcasing their cultural richness.

PEOPLink

In the last five years, PEOPLink has built a network of 55 Trading Partners (TPs) in 21 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia (see www.peoplink.org/partners/). One of these Trading Partners is Mahaguthi - Trade with a Conscience - in Nepal (www.peoplink.org/mahaguthi/). The annual sales of Mahaguthi accelerated from 8-10% to 30-40% as a result of using digital images and setting up a Web catalogue with the assistance of PEOPLink. They also reported a reduction in high photography costs, simple, economical paper catalogue production, contacts with new buyers, and fast communication with the buyers.

Last year PEOPLink composed an international team of programmers/experts in the US, Ukraine, Albania, Siberia, India, Ecuador and, most recently, Zimbabwe to develop a new tool that would incorporate these lessons. The instrument developed by this team is called "CatGen" for Catalogue Generator (www.catgen.com). CatGen is a comprehensive digital communications platform designed specifically for use by SMEs anywhere in the world.

The CatGen software can be downloaded for free from www.catgen.com/download/. On the local computer (without Internet connection) the software is a very easy-to-use database, with three functions:

- digital information and inventory management.
- print cost effective paper catalogues with simple inkjet printer.
- automatically makes a Web catalogue.

Among others things, each company data set is password protected, so many firms can share the same computer (as in an Internet café); users work with the local database off-line, thereby minimizing expensive access charges; all data can be recovered from the CatGen server; and data output and instructions are multilingual.

In addition to the database, there will be a CatGen.com website that will link all the many players in international trade (producers, importers, shippers, brokers, designers, retailers, and the buying public). In the "Global Product Search" on the catgen.com website, potential buyers can find all products from the Producer Groups that are using the CatGen database. This website will be actively promoted by the PEOPLink/CatGen team, both on the North American and European market, to ensure that buyers will know about the Web catalogues made by the SMEs. By the end of 2001 CatGen will also provide payments and logistics modules for the SMEs.

CatGen is developed to help transforming the digital divide into online opportunities for SMEs all over the world. It puts the power of global e-commerce into the hands of the more marginalized groups themselves, thereby generating employment and income while engaging them to project their cultural images on a world stage in a manner that they can control, and not leave behind in the digital dust.

Contact: jschouten@peoplink.nl or www.catgen.com

On the Agenda

Values and Quality of Development Information

The 2001 meeting of the EADI Information Management Working Group will take place from September 12 to 14, in Bordeaux, France. It will be hosted by RAFID (Réseau Aquitain Formation et Information pour le Développement).

The ambition is to move away from and beyond the IT tools, and to have discussions and presentations

focusing on the kind of basic values and notions of quality and relevance that motivate development information professionals.

Contact: www.rafid.u-bordeaux.fr/eadi/index.htm or dirdoc@regards.cnrs.fr

Atelier 'Réliser la Radio Rurale à l'Internet'

The workshop, organised from September 18 – 20, 2001 in Bamako, Mali, will bring together national and international experts to discuss a proposal to establish an information and communication network, based on Internet technology, to link rural radio stations in Southern Mali with relevant agricultural information.

Contact: riccardo.delcastello@fao.org

Internet Training Planning Workshop

From October 15 – 17, 2001 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, librarians involved in the facilitation and local organisation of the "Using the Internet" travelling workshops programme will meet to evaluate the workshop programme and consider topics for a further series of workshops for librarians.

Contact: www.inasp.org.uk/lsp/internet/

ITU Telecom Africa 2001: Bridging the Digital Divide

To be held 12-16 November in South Africa, this will be the International Telecommunication Union's fifth TELECOM event for the Africa region. AFRICA 2001 will encompass a Policy and Development Summit, an Infrastructure and Applications Summit, a Telecom Development Symposium, and a Youth Forum.

Contact: www.itu.int/africa2001/

About *iConnect*

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