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PAN ASIA ICT R&D Grants Programme

Narrative Report – Proposal Ref: 0301A3_S03

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Research Organisation	Engineers Without Borders, Canada
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Research Team	Sarah Murray, Parker Mitchell, Nabeel Al-Kady, Louis Dorval, Benjamin Green, John English, Alicia Bonoan, and Gemma Gabuya
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Narrative Report

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1. Project Synthesis

The Filipino government has identified Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a source of competitive advantage for the country and is strongly promoting ICT development. ICT centres offering computer literacy courses and Internet access are springing up in urban areas. However, this risks exacerbating the divide between the better-off and worse-off Filipino communities. Many of the ICT centres are private and offer courses that are unaffordable for poor Filipinos. As well, few rural areas and peri-urban communities have access to ICT facilities or literacy courses.

A number of local community initiatives have sought to bridge this divide. In 2001, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Lingayen approached Engineers Without Borders (EWB) to seek support in setting up a low-cost ICT centre that would offer affordable ICT training to local residents. This centre was completed in August 2002 at a cost USD 7,000.

The success of the first phase of this project has led to much interest from other community organizations around the Philippines. Overall, the research objective of the second phase of this program was to determine whether sustainable, ICT centres and ICT training could be created to offer poor Filipinos opportunities to improve their livelihoods. More specifically the scope of this grant had the following objectives:

1. Study the impact of the TESDA Lingayen ICT centre; in particular, whether it is accessible to poorer members of the community
2. Set-up 3 additional ICT centres based on the TESDA Lingayen model and continue to test its impact on their communities
3. Create a guide to setting up low-cost ICT centres in the Philippines offering low-cost training and ICT services

After studying the Lingayen ICT centre, our principle findings continue to support that the creation of ICT resource centres can be set-up to improve the income and employment opportunities for underprivileged Filipinos. With changes to our model and programming, the ICT centres from the first two phases of this project - 45 computers in all – offer their training to the 'out-of-school' youth (OSY) and persons with disabilities with a combined objective of over 500 beneficiaries. We accomplished this for less than \$35,000, which is a very low-cost model, especially given that the first two phases were the pilot phases of the project.

With a great deal of experience and a successful model in place, the next phase of the program promises to reach even more communities. EWB plans to achieve effective capacity building within our partner, the Department of Social Welfare and Development to provide long-term impact to more beneficiaries who will be able to use the skills they acquire to increase economic and social freedom. In the next phase of this project, EWB plans to send over 150 computers and 10 volunteers to assist in the development of centres throughout the Philippines. These centres have the combined objective of providing computer literacy training, while encouraging the youth to return to formal education and building a structure to find or create employment.

2. Research Problem

The Need for a Low-cost ICT Centre Model for Rural and Peri-urban Areas in the Philippines

The recent opportunities afforded by ICTs throughout the world have led many development organizations to seek to set-up ICT centres in developing communities to offer access to computers and the Internet. Further, NGOs build local capacity to ensure sustainability. In respect to this need, the Filipino government has identified a competitive advantage in ICTs and promotes ICT development nationally.

The challenge with ICT centres is to design their creation and programming in such a way that positive and sustainable development outcomes result and that they are ideally replicable. As we know, ICT is a *means* to improved development, and not a *goal*. After the experience of the first centre in Lingayen, we established three principles that must be followed to ensure positive development outcomes, sustainability, and replicability:

- **Low initial cost** borne by the centre, so the centre is not forced to charge large fees to recoup the capital investment.
- **Innovative programming** that
 - Offers targeted services that benefit the poor
 - Contains a cost structure for services based on a pay-what-you-can principle, such that all people can have access to the services.
- **Local skills** must be built to maintain and repair the ICT centre long after the implementing company/organisation has departed.

The scope of this research grant sought to demonstrate the viability of a low-cost ICT centre and to produce further technical guidelines on setting up such ICT centres. The goal is to create a replicable model for the Philippines and beyond, based on the experience of three more ICT centres.

Evolution of the Research Problem since the Project was approved

Following our analysis of the Lingayen centre after one year of operation, we determined that three additional principles are important to ensure we achieve positive development outcomes and sustainability as mentioned earlier. Thus, we created three new areas of research, which greatly improve our model:

- **Monitoring** – rigorous monitoring allows us to efficiently follow-up and ensures the state of the centres. Therefore, we focused on developing the required monitoring tools and structure.
- **Impact assessment** – impact assessment allows us target our programming approach for each trainee's circumstance, while following the development outcomes of the ICT centres. Therefore, we focused our research on developing a set of impact assessment tools and structure.

- **Holistic programming** – a holistic programming approach that specifically addresses the social and employment needs of our target beneficiaries furthers our impact. Therefore, we focused our research on developing a holistic ICT training program, which incorporates life skills and entrepreneurship for the Filipino OSY.

3. Research Findings

Overall, our most significant research finding is the new definition of our model. Based on the experience of the four ICT centres, we created a scalable, low-cost, appropriate, and sustainable ICT resource centre solution and this model has been implemented in the three new ICT centres that we set-up – allowing us to achieve significant research findings. According to our partner and to our own observations, we have built a recipe that incorporates both the needs of the underprivileged Filipinos and the socio-economic reality of the semi-urban communities in the Philippines.

Following the evolution of our research problem, our new model definition and research findings include the development and successful implementation in four ICT centres with:

- A **low initial cost structure** that allows us to set-up the centres with very low implementation costs to allow services at an appropriate cost by leveraging on volunteer time and computer donations from Canada
- **Holistic programming** with a new and customized course curriculum that focuses not only on ICT skills but also on life skills and entrepreneurship training - our newly formed partnership with DSWD allows us to focus the project on the local needs of a community with the help of their city or provincial offices
- A **monitoring structure** that ensures continuity and rigorous monitoring with the assistance of the national office of our partner and was developed on the lessons learned from evaluating the first centre in Lingayen
- An **impact assessment structure** developed on the lessons learned from evaluating the first centre in Lingayen and measures the impact of the ICT centres on all of its stakeholders
- **Innovative programming** that includes linkages of the ICT centre activities with other public and private bodies and helps the beneficiaries use their skills after the ICT training, through opportunities with entrepreneurship training and on-the-job placements

4. Fulfilment of Objectives

Referring to the prior scope of this grant, the following lists our planned outputs and the details regarding their respective fulfilment:

Objective	Fulfillment
<p>1. Study the impact of the TESDA Lingayen ICT centre; in particular, whether it is accessible to poorer members of the community and whether women are using the centre.</p>	<p>We achieved this objective. Our team spent over 9 person-weeks in the in the Lingayen centre to study its situation after one year of activity. This study also shifted our model objectives and research findings (as stated in section Research Findings 3.0). Refer to Research Output Report (outputs 2, 3, and 4) for the results of this study.</p>
<p>2. Set-up 3 ICT centres based on the TESDA Lingayen model and continue to test their impact on their communities.</p>	<p>We achieved this objective. This objective proved more difficult and complex than originally planned. However, despite the challenges outlined in our outputs, we successfully set-up 3 centres with a new partner in the Philippines and developed monitoring and impact assessment tools to ensure their sustainability and positive development outcomes. Refer to Research Output Report (outputs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) for details.</p>
<p>3. Create a guide to setting up low-cost ICT centres in the Philippines offering low-cost training and ICT services and make available all necessary technical information/training programs.</p>	<p>Since the set-up of the centres proved to be more complex and we changed our research focus to develop a monitoring structure, impact assessment tools, and holistic programming to answer the social needs of our target group, we achieved this objective partially. The complete guide to setting up an ICT resource centre has become the primary objective of the Scala Program, Phase III 2003. EWB plans to develop this guide after 1 year of activity within the new programming (and new partner), as well as with the successful implementation of 10 additional ICT centres in 2004. Refer to Research Output Report (output 8) for details.</p>

5. Project design and implementation

The following lists the activities supported under the project and the time period covered. In addition, the research methods are listed and reference to the associated output:

	Activities Supported under the Project	Period of Time 65 Person-weeks	Research Methods and Analytical Techniques	Associated Output
1	Study and modification to the TESDA Lingayen ICT centre	9 Person-weeks	Meetings and questionnaires with the stakeholders	Refer to Research Output Report (output 4) for details.
2	Research for a new partner	4 Person-weeks	Meetings with local development bodies	Refer to Research Output Report (output 5) for details.
3	Set-up of 3 ICT centres	32 Person-weeks	Based on our lessons and experience from the Lingayen centre	Refer to Research Output Report (output 1) for details.
4	Development of a monitoring structure	2 Person-weeks	Meeting with TESDA and the DSWD and inspired by the IDRC's <u>Assessing Community Telecentres</u>	Refer to Research Output Report (output 4) for details.
5	Development of an impact assessment structure	4 Person-weeks	Meeting with the DSWD and inspired by the British Department for International Development's <u>Sustainable Livelihoods Approach</u> and IDRC's <u>Assessing Community Telecentres</u>	Refer to Research Output Report (output 3) for details.
6	Development of a new course curriculum	2 Person-weeks	Meeting with the DSWD and inspired by the World Bank's <u>Out of School Children and Youth in the Philippines: Issues and Opportunities</u> and the	Refer to Research Output Report (output 2) for details.

			National Youth Commission's <u>Situation of the Youth in the Philippines 1998</u>	
7	Development of a new programming (linkages)	2 Person- weeks	Meetings with other public/private collaborators	Refer to Research Output Report (output 5) for details.
8	Development of preliminary structure for Phase III	10 Person- weeks	Based on our lessons and the 4 ICT centres	Refer to Research Output Report (output 8) for details.

6. Project outputs and dissemination

Referring to the prior scope of this grant, the following lists with self-assessment the project outputs. Where appropriate, dissemination efforts are detailed:

Output	Description	Fulfilment
1	Development of three new ICT resource centres in the Philippines. These ICT resource centres serve the rural poor	We achieved this output. Refer to the Research Output Report (output 1), which explains the location and scheduling of the set-up of the 3 ICT centres
2	New programming for the Lingayen and new centres, based on a research paper evaluating IT training centre and training methodology implemented in Lingayen 2002	We achieved this output. Refer to the Research Output Report (output 2), which explains the details of the course curriculum and how it is appropriate to the Filipino youth situation. [For the details about the Lingayen centre, refer Research Output Report (output 4)]
3	A research paper evaluating the impact of increased availability of low-cost IT training on members of a local community. This will focus on IT centres that cater to the less well off and marginalized in society	We achieved this output. Refer to the Research Output Report (output 3), which describes the impact assessment tools and structure that was implemented and how it was derived.
4	A guide to setting up a low-cost ICT centre and guide for running low-cost training programs. This will be used by future IT centres around the world - as applicable - to make IT available to a greater number of people	As mentioned, we partially achieved this output. Refer to the Research Output Report (output 4), which explains the monitoring tools and structure put in place to ensure the program's objectives in every centre. It also reports the observations made in the Lingayen centre . [For more information about the guide, refer to objective 3 in section 4. Fulfilment of Objectives in this document]

5	A policy paper on the role of western NGOs in facilitating the setting up of low-cost IT centres and training programs	We achieved this output only partially, since we lowered the priority of this research to the successful and sustainable set-up of our ICT resource centres. Refer to the Research Output Report (output 5) for more information.
6	The set of training programs in English for basic computer literacy	We achieved this output and have successfully completed and improved upon the training programs throughout Phase II. Refer to the Research Output Report (output 6) for the set of ICT training programs.
7	A series of technical appendixes on computer/LAN set-up	We achieved this output partially, since we decided to move our research focus away from the technical aspects. Refer to the Research Output Report (output 7), which is a technical guide on the networking and troubleshooting of a Local Area Network.
8	A plan for phase III of the Scala Program to help less well off Filipinos gain access to technology that will help them improve their lives	We achieved this output and Phase III is underway. Refer to the Research Output Report (output 8), which highlights the plan and objectives of Phase III of the Scala Program.

Dissemination Details

We have not focused on dissemination efforts of our tools yet since the structure that will hold all of these tools together is the “Guide to setting-up an ICT resource centre” which has become the primary objective of Phase III of the Scala Program. However, we are offering all of the tools on the Scala Program web site (www.ewb.ca/scala). Currently, we are restructuring the Scala Program web site so these tools will be available by December 1st, 2003. Further, other NGOs and Filipino public departments have already used and adapted our monitoring tools and training programs for their respective uses. Other tools, lessons learned, and procedures are featured in the Scala Program Manual distributed to the chapters across Canada who are now involved in Phase III of the Scala Program.

7. Capacity Building

This phase of the Scala Project has had a strong impact on capacity building on both our partners and our volunteers, while specifically building the capacity of women. In fact, the outcome of capacity building was so effective that some social workers have already started to use these tools for evaluation of other activities than those of the ICT centre.

▪ **Institutional Reinforcement and Sustainability**

Since our ICT centres were built within the existing structure of the local offices of our partner the DSWD, we have worked with the staff of these offices extensively. Through this close collaboration between the EWB volunteers and the DSWD social workers, both parties benefited from each other's expertise. The DSWD was able to clearly define the situation the Filipino youth in their community. In addition, they play a key role in customizing our model for their respective communities. On the other hand, we trained the majority of the social worker staff the use of computers. In the specific case of Tacloban, we even organized night classes to accommodate more employees to have the opportunity of learning basic computer skills. These skills will allow the social workers to use the Internet for research and communication purposes. An added awareness and connectivity within the DSWD will have the second objective of making information diffusion much more efficient within the department. This collaboration also allowed us to share the lessons learned from the Lingayen centre with the new centre managers. This was particularly important when developing and implementing the monitoring and impact assessment tools.

This project has provided an opportunity to work with the administrators of the national office of the DSWD. It is important to note that all individuals working within the DSWD must be social workers by profession. This gives their leadership style a proactive and human dimension. We learned from this leadership style and the social workers of the DSWD played a major role in the development and structure of our program tools, our model, and the elaboration of plans for Phase III. Our work in the Philippines comprised of knowledge transfer and capacity building for all involved.

▪ **Particular Contribution to the Capacity Building of Women**

More than 90% of the social workers of the DSWD with whom we have worked are women. This is to say all of the Institutional Reinforcement described earlier has impacted almost exclusively women. In addition, the gender distribution of the trainees to date has been very close to 50%, giving the benefits of training to both genders.

8. Project Management

As can be seen by the successful outputs of the Scala Project, project management has been quite satisfactory. Please refer to the attached 'Letter to Nanditha – November 2003' for the project management change to Sarah Murray and rationale, from George Roter.

9. Impact

Through our new and successful model, we have achieved strong development impact. With this model in place, our ICT centres from the first two phases of this project offer their training to the out-of-school youth with a combined objective of over 500 beneficiaries.

The next phase of our project has an expected impact of reaching even more communities. Through the effective capacity building of our partner we will provide long-term impact to more beneficiaries who will be able to use the skills they acquire to increase economic and social freedom. EWB plans to send over 150 computers and 10 volunteers to assist in the development of centres throughout the Philippines. These centres will improve the livelihood opportunities for over 1,500 poor Filipinos per year.

10. Overall Assessment

Based on the investment of our time, effort, and funding our project has been successful in improving our model for the development of ICT resource centres and integrated ICT training for the Philippines. Further, our innovation work has been recognised by the prestigious Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) Youth Award 2003, which aims to reward and bring international recognition to the outstanding work of young people who have used ICT for the promotion of development around the world.

11. Recommendations

The management of this grant and project has been very satisfactory. We have no recommendations at this time.