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## **Evaluation of UNESCO's Community Multimedia Centres**

**Final Report**

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## Acronyms

ADSL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line,
AMARC	Association Mondial des Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires
CBO	Community based organization
CI	UNESCO Communication and Information sector
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CMC	Community Multimedia Centre
EAR	Ethnographic Action Research
HQ	UNESCO Headquarters
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technology for Development
ICTs	Information and Communications Technologies
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IPDC	International Programme for Development Communication
IT	Information Technology
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
NGO	Non governmental organization
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBM	Results Based Management
UPS	Universal Power Supply

## Executive Summary

### Brief description and background of activities evaluated

**Background:** A Community Multimedia Centre (CMC) is a community-based facility offering both community radio broadcasting and telecentre services (access to Internet and other information and communications technologies - ICTs). This hybrid approach is believed to provide significant support to community development by strengthening economic opportunities through information and training. Moreover, through access to and exchange of knowledge, views and beliefs, CMCs strengthen social inclusion, public participation, education, agriculture, health and other factors necessary for healthy and sustainable societies.

**UNESCO's activities:** The initiative is managed by the Communications and Information (CI) sector. It is in its fifth year of operation, with 39 pilot CMCs established in communities across Latin America/Caribbean, Africa and South Asia. UNESCO has also provided networking opportunities and support tools for management, multimedia training, offline access to Internet content, and action research and evaluation. New pilots are being set up in Central and Eastern Europe; additional funding through IPDC is being provided to new individual CMCs; and a scale-up is underway in Senegal, Mali and Mozambique, increasing the number of CMCs in each country from two to three to fifty or sixty. UNESCO also supports other types of "community gathering points" within the CI and other sectors, including telecentres, cultural centres and community learning centres.

**This evaluation** assesses what can be learned from the pilot phase that will both strengthen the CMC model and improve UNESCO's programming for future CMCs, in particular through the scale-up initiative. It was conducted by the International Institute for Sustainable Development between April and October 2005. An evaluation framework was approved by the UNESCO Internal Oversight Service. In addition to a review of CMC documentation, site visits were made to 13 CMCs in Mali, Benin, Mozambique, Tanzania, India, and Nepal. The remaining 26 CMCs were surveyed by telephone, with 11 responses. An additional 26 in person or phone interviews were conducted with UNESCO stakeholders, donors, partners and peers active in the field of ICTs for development (ICT4D).

### Major findings (achievements and challenges)

The evaluation recognized several **achievements** with UNESCO's CMC activities

- The CMCs are accepted by and fully integrated into the communities and can in many cases be sustained beyond the pilot phase without core operating grants. The effort and funding that UNESCO has channeled into this transformative initiative has been exceeded by the hard work and commitment of the CMC staff and the communities where they are based. Their contribution to improving quality of life through access to information is confirmed. Equitable and expanded access to ICTS is promoted in many ways, such as subsidized training for special, marginalized groups, close work with schools, small businesses and the independent sector or providing information to more remote communities through radio.
- Longer term benefits are already being realized within individual communities, such as the gradual removal of barriers to social inclusion, the stimulation of poverty alleviation through access to knowledge of better health, resource management and agriculture practices, through the establishment of listeners clubs as self help groups (a direct connection between CMC work and the generation of income from small savings and credit operations), and the creation of new livelihoods opportunities. The CMC role in fostering cultural resilience – the capacity of a community to retain

critical knowledge and at the same time adapt to external influences and pressures - is particularly remarkable.

- The evaluation identifies the following success factors for CMCs: building on an existing facility; ownership and/or long term community commitment; good integration of radio and telecentre components; an orientation to development; diversification of content to meet community needs, including promotion of local culture; access to tools and expertise developed by UNESCO and others; diversification of revenues, including capacity to approach local/national governments for delivery of services and the international donor community for project funding.
- UNESCO was commended by key informants for excellence in delivery of the initiative. The CI sector effectively deployed a “rapid results” approach, planning each CMC as a “mini-project” with the elements of small scale, results orientation, rapid implementation and vertical integration of objectives and tasks within each project.

The evaluation recognized the following **challenges** for UNESCO’s CMC activities

- UNESCO has developed several different models of community centres within the CI and other sectors of UNESCO. Intra and intersectoral cooperation has not been realized in terms of sharing management lessons among these centres, so that they can serve UNESCO’s mandate in a more coherent and collaborative manner.
- With the notable exception of the UNESCO India office and its support for South Asian CMCs, in the opinions expressed by CMC managers it would appear that strong and consistent field support for the initiative is missing.
- Absent from the programme logic is a strategic timeframe for the initiative, with benchmarks to assess the value of the initiative to UNESCO itself against UNESCO’s longer term interests.
- The lead evaluator heard several conflicting messages from a number of informants within and outside of UNESCO Headquarters: that the initiative was considered a success and a flagship activity; but also that it has overshadowed other initiatives in the sector; and that in spite of the commitment to proceed to scaleup, questions were being asked about whether UNESCO should be involved in scale up<sup>1</sup>. The evaluators suggest that there is a significant lack of clarity on UNESCO’s own strategic interests. Is UNESCO simply testing, promoting and withdrawing from a model that others may or may not choose to adopt; does it intend to support current and new CMCs through training, networking and encouraging national policy change and international funding as a regular activity of the CI sector; will it go so far as to use these centres for the delivery of UNESCO and other UN agency programming?
- If the full costs of CMC operations are calculated (capital costs, repairs and upgrades, power, connectivity, salaries and staff development, programming, marketing, networking and so forth), it is clear that CMCs cannot be sustained solely upon charges paid by individuals (for advertising, training, computer access, etc.) Startup costs may also be underestimated. Efforts to achieve financial sustainability may be forcing CMC managers to focus efforts on services targeted to those who can pay, losing the scope for activities targeted at the poor.
- CMCs depend on volunteers for the delivery of training, radio programming and other services. However, Centres are challenged with finding appropriate incentives for volunteers and struggle with managing volunteer turnover. Furthermore, some Centres observe a contradiction in being held to a business standard (pursuing revenue generation for financial sustainability) and to poverty alleviation objectives while at the same time being expected to achieve these using unpaid labour. Some family conflict was noted between the desire of young people to volunteer at the CMC and the need for family income.
- Opportunities for networking and staff development are very limited. While the tools developed by UNESCO are helpful, in order to be sustainable CMCs will need to learn

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<sup>1</sup> In the course of the final review of the report, the Sector contested the above statement as a misinterpretation of what was said.

how to learn from each other, and will need to access expertise more easily and systematically.

- Many CMCs lack an enabling policy environment. Sudden changes in national policies on connectivity charges destabilize CMCs. Broadcast licensing restrictions or restrictions on press freedoms prevent CMCs from being able to broadcast freely and to a broader constituency.

## Recommendations

- UNESCO Headquarters should undertake a thorough cross sectoral review of all of its models for community centres for learning, information, culture and communications with a view to much stronger and mutually reinforcing collaboration, if not outright integration into a single management unit.
- Management of the scale up exercise should be devolved to the region, to oversee startups of CMCs, to handle crises, to stimulate interaction among the CMCs within countries and regions, and to build national networks of CMCs that can lobby as a group for enabling policy environments and better funding.
- A “CMC global” focus should be maintained at Headquarters to oversee tools development, training, networking, evaluation and funding support for current and new CMCs, and to promote the use of CMCs as development platforms to other sectors and agencies.
- To become sustainable, CMCs need more training from UNESCO Headquarters and field offices in longer term strategic, technology, and financial planning, in particular full cost analysis. CMCs should be encouraged to develop a hybrid approach to financial planning, that includes income generating activities, possibly the selling of shares and memberships (the cooperative model) and not-for-profit programs and services that could be supported by organizations hosting the CMC, governments and donors. Skills for approaching governments and donors should be developed.
- CMCs should pursue staff development for all CMC staff (not just managers) through staff exchanges between CMCs and through regular group online courses with a trainer. Networking and knowledge sharing should be fostered and facilitated by UNESCO Headquarters, through e-conferences and other means.
- UNESCO Headquarters and field offices should undertake a systematic review of the challenge of volunteerism in marginalized communities. Guidelines should be developed on appropriate uses of volunteers, with sensitivity to expectations for recognition and compensation, potential family conflicts particularly with young volunteers, ensuring budget lines for incentives, and managing the cycle of new and departing volunteers.
- UNESCO Headquarters should accelerate efforts with its member states to create an enabling policy environment for ICT4D. Key national policy issues include: stable charges for rural connectivity; provision of reliable, affordable energy supply; easier licensing for community radio stations; ensuring freedom of the press; advancing e-government, so that CMCs can provide access to government services to their communities; committing to the use of CMCs as a matter of policy for the delivery of agriculture, health and education extension services; and integrating development courses into tertiary computer, engineering and other technology oriented educational programs.
- UNESCO should consider what role CMCs can play not only shaping national ICT policy, but national cultural policy, in light of the strong contribution CMCs make to cultural resilience.

## **A. Introduction**

Dans un village un cultivateur à qui on a demandé ce que serait devenu Banikoara sans le CMC et surtout la radio a répondu: imaginez un peu un fou guidant un aveugle.

In the spring of 2005, UNESCO contracted the International Institute for Sustainable Development to undertake a programme evaluation of the Community Multimedia Centre Initiative (CMCs). A CMC, as developed by UNESCO, is a community based facility offering a combination of community radio broadcasting and telecentre services (access to Internet and other information and communications technologies - ICTs). This initiative is in its fifth year of operation, with 39 pilot CMCs now established in selected communities across three regions: Latin America/Caribbean; Africa; and South Asia<sup>2</sup>.

In the opinion of the evaluation team, the CMC initiative is an outstanding success, and certainly deserves the consideration it has been given to date by UNESCO as a flagship endeavour of the Communications and Information Sector. UNESCO is to be commended for recognizing the potential of bringing together a range of technologies for communications in support of development at the community level. Across all regions, the CMC pilots are demonstrating an important role in community development and community resilience: strengthening cultural roots and values; breaking through social isolation for marginalized groups; connecting communities to the diaspora and to national and international trends and events; supporting education, health, skills development and other important social and economic development efforts.

A partner in the CMC initiative notes: "Having worked on the ground with some of these projects, there's no doubt they are making an impact locally". The assessment of CMCs in Mozambique, submitted by one team member, in fact applies across the whole initiative:

The main objective of the introduction of ICTs in the most marginalized communities has been achieved. The CMCs are accepted by and fully integrated into the communities on the one hand, and still operational beyond the project phase even without core project funding on the other. Their contribution to improving quality of life by satisfying basic needs related to access to information is more than confirmed. Equitable and expanded access to ICTS was promoted through the CMC activities in many ways, e.g. subsidized training for special groups, close work with schools or providing information through more accessible media such as wall newspapers and radios<sup>3</sup>.

With this positive context in mind, the evaluation team presents the following report that highlights current strengths of the initiative and opportunities for improvement and expansion.

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<sup>2</sup>On the list of 41 CMCs provided to the evaluation team, two centres were not included in the process: Dondo, on the grounds that it was supported through a different UNESCO programme and not through the CI CMC initiative; and Kilosa, on the grounds that it was not yet established at the time of the evaluation.

<sup>3</sup> Ana Paula Assubuji

## 1. Programme Logic

The Community Multimedia Centres initiative has the following programme logic:

### Goal

To foster equitable access to information and knowledge for development, reduce the digital divide and promote social inclusion

### Objectives

To create community multimedia centres in disadvantaged communities in developing countries that integrate community radio with access to the Internet and other information and communications technologies, to improve the quality of life of all citizens.

To overcome linguistic, literacy-level and other barriers that prevent disadvantaged communities from benefiting from information and knowledge.

To empower marginalized communities through CMCs, resulting in their active participation in the information society.

### Activities

- Working with existing operations for either community radio or telecentres, introduce the complementary technology to create the hybrid CMC.
- Train managers and facilitators
- Develop tools to support:
  - the management of the CMCs
  - provision of information appropriate to local context,
  - monitoring and evaluation of the CMCs.
- Support access to, production and delivery of content in support of democratization, literacy campaigns, basic and non-formal education, government programs and other public service activity
- Build partnerships with bilateral and international development assistance agencies, governments, NGOs, and private enterprise to promote and support the CMC model

## 2. Background to the CMC initiative

The evolution of the CMC concept, and in particular the Kothmale, Sri Lanka, prototype, is well documented. In 1979, a community radio station was set up in Kothmale, in response to a resettlement of members of a community around a new agricultural development project. Settlers in the project wanted to maintain their cultural roots and interaction within their new environment. In setting up the radio station, radio programming producers were recruited from among the young people of the settlers, to gather opinions, local music, and family news and play back to villagers. Two revolutions have been identified in this effort:

- #1: locally developed and approved content
- #2: introduction of the use of volunteers to do the programming

In 1994, development agencies began to ask how the Internet could be introduced to serve communities. UNESCO in Sri Lanka determined that community access would be

cheaper than individual access. Radio could be used to broadcast information retrieved from Internet for the benefit of the broader community. Linking Internet access to existing community radio stations had the potential both to introduce a new technology to those in the immediate vicinity of the station, and also to provide access to new information to those farther away. Kothmale became the prototype for adding a telecentre to a radio station, but continuing to apply the two earlier lessons – locally developed content and use of volunteers. At the international conference, Global Knowledge 2000, UNESCO generated considerable interest in the prototype, and secured the backing of several key development agencies to begin a more extensive piloting exercise.

In the pilot phase, several variations on the prototype as well as the creation of support tools and networking opportunities were explored by the Communications and Information (CI) sector of UNESCO:

- Addition of telecentre services to an existing community radio station
- Use by a telecentre of a commercial FM station to broadcast “Internet browsing” programmes (answering listener questions by browsing the Internet)
- Addition of community radio broadcasting to an existing telecentre
- Addition of telecentre services to an existing community television station
- Addition of telecentre services to an existing radio broadcast on a TV cable network
- Use of existing networks of telecentres or community radio stations

In all cases, there was already an established facility (telecentre/radio/TV) either with its own community organization supporting it or hosted by an established NGO or government department. At the time of the evaluation, 39 such centres had been established in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean that are supported through the CMC initiative of the CI sector of UNESCO. New pilots are being established in Central and Eastern Europe but these fall outside the scope of this evaluation.

### **3. Purpose of the CMC evaluation**

#### **3.1 Objectives**

As with all evaluations, the CMC evaluation is both an accountability exercise and a learning exercise:

- Has the initiative met its stated goals and objectives, through the activities proposed to and supported by UNESCO member countries and donors?
- What can be learned from the pilot CMCs that will improve the design, implementation and results of future CMCs that are planned as part of UNESCO's intention to scale up this initiative for greater reach and benefit to marginalized communities?

The evaluation should serve to strengthen similar initiatives (such as cultural centres, learning centres and telecentres) managed in other sections and sectors of UNESCO. More broadly, it should inform organizations outside of UNESCO that are working in the application of broadcast and other ICTs for development, for the purposes of replicating in other initiatives UNESCO's lessons learned.

Of particular importance is the determination of whether and how CMCs can enhance and support how marginalized communities advance their own sustainable development, through:

- Increased social participation
- Increased access to information and communications technologies

## 3.2 Cautionary notes

### 3.2.1 Attribution

While the evaluation team has concluded that the CMCs pilots are serving their communities well, it is difficult to attribute this success entirely to the UNESCO initiative. All CMCs in the pilot program were created through the addition of a technology or service to an existing facility that has had a variety of investments from the community and other donors. The team found no mechanisms for assessing this type of leveraging initiative, short of intensive journaling exercises that would have to have been initiated at the start of the UNESCO support to each CMC. Such exercises would have documented observed changes in audience composition, behaviours of users and partners, and so forth since the introduction of the new component. A baseline of the status and impact of each of the existing facilities would have been necessary in order to determine whether the positive results the team found could be directly attributed to UNESCO's intervention. With the exception of the Evalnet report on the Uganda telecentres, this type of baseline was not available. We would like to suggest to UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service that more work is needed to develop and deploy tools for assessing these types of interventions that leverage investments from other agencies.

### 3.2.2 Number of variables in the initiative

The evaluation team noted not only the variations in the prototype that were implemented, but also the many differences in local hosting and ownership arrangements that influenced operations, management and outcomes of the CMCs. Significant differences in national IT and broadcast policies also led to variations in the delivery of services – solutions which might not be transferable to CMCs in other countries. In the end, each CMC had many individual characteristics and the performance of each CMC was significantly influenced by local circumstances and national policies. Although the team asserts that the CMCs have had real impact in their communities, we are aware of the challenge in drawing conclusions about the initiative as a whole when there is so much variation in the field.

## 4. Evaluation methodology

An evaluation matrix was used to determine what the decision making points for UNESCO should be with respect to the CMC initiative; as well as to make a broader determination for the development assistance community on the utility of the CMC model. Key areas of investigation included:

- Programme design
- Programme implementation
- Programme outputs, outcomes and results
- Future of the CMC initiative

The matrix and criteria for assessment were developed in consultation with, and approved by UNESCO's oversight department, drawing from the following sources:

- Terms of reference for the evaluation provided by UNESCO;
- Funding agreements with the Swiss Development Cooperation in 2001 and 2004
- UNESCO's internal planning documents [32/C5]

- Related formal evaluations
  - Information and Communications Technology for Development: The Case of Uganda, by Evalnet
  - Rapport d'observation Centres Multimédia Communautaires (CMC) de Banikoara (Bénin), Koutiala (Mali), Dassasgo (Burkina Faso)
  - Evaluation of the Multimedia Training Kit
- Interviews with UNESCO stakeholders
- Interviews with key informants at UNESCO Headquarters

See Appendix 1 for the Terms of Reference and Appendix 2 for the full evaluation matrix.

The evaluation team considered the following inputs:

- Documentation review. See Appendix 3 for list of documents consulted.
- Site visits to all CMCs established in the following countries:
  - Mali
  - Benin
  - Mozambique
  - Tanzania
  - India
  - Nepal

The evaluation team leader visited CMCs in Tanzania and Nepal as a comparative exercise, to better assess whether findings from the rest of the team might signal interesting regional differences between African and South Asian CMCs. The team leader was also able to meet twice in person with the evaluator for India, and to review the Budikote case study.

- All other CMCs were contacted for telephone interview or submitted responses by email to a questionnaire. See Appendix 4 for the complete list of CMCs that participated in the evaluation.
- Interviews in person with UNESCO informants at Headquarters and in regions where site visits took place
- Telephone interviews with
  - CMC initiative partners (those organizations who participated in development of tools or other aspects of the CMC initiative)
  - Donors to the CMC initiative (either to pilot CMCs or to tools)
  - A peer group: organizations working in the field of ICTs for development but not directly involved in the CMC initiative

See Appendix 5 for the list of informants. See Appendix 6 for the protocols for site visits and interviews.

All 39 CMCs were contacted during the evaluation. Close to one-third of these were visited by members of the evaluation team, for intensive meetings between two and three days in duration with CMC staff, user/listener groups and community stakeholders. All other CMC managers were contacted for telephone interviews. Overall, the team was able to engage close to 60% of all CMCs. The regional response was strongest for Africa (76%), with 57% of the Caribbean CMCs involved. The lack of response from Sri Lanka (only 1 CMC out of 8), and Bhutan (0 out of 2) lowered the response rate for Asia to 40%. Additional input on the Sri Lankan experience was derived from independent studies on Kothmale, from a UNESCO staff member who developed the Sri Lanka programme, and from Ms. Tanya Notley of Queensland University of Technology, a partner in the Ethnographic Action Research project underway with selected South Asia CMCs. Ms. Notley was a former volunteer at one of the Sri Lankan community radio

stations, and was interviewed in person during the Nepal site visits. The only countries where we have no input are: Bhutan, Cuba, Suriname, and Dominica.

UNESCO provided a list of potential informants outside of the CMCs:

- Selected UNESCO staff at Headquarters and in field offices; and selected national UNESCO Commission representatives: 60% response. Input from UNESCO Headquarters contacts was comprehensive. Input from offices in the regions was somewhat lower than expected. We were unable to engage field offices in Bangkok, Havana and Accra. However, we do have inputs from selected UNESCO field offices in countries where site visits took place.
- Partners who assisted with the development of tools and other aspects of the CMC initiative: Over 60% response
- Peers: Others working in the ICT for development field: 60% response
- Donors: The two representatives for SDC suggested by UNESCO were interviewed; the representative for DFID also responded, for a total response rate of 75% of the donor group.

It is important to note that this evaluation is of the Community Multimedia Centre initiative as a whole and not of any one CMC in particular. All CMCs who participated did so on the understanding that the team was not assessing the performance of the individual CMC being interviewed. Therefore every effort has been made to aggregate observations and attribute comments from CMCs to a country or a region rather than to a single CMC. Where there may be opportunities to strengthen a particular CMC, the evaluation team is happy to discuss these in person with the CMC initiative manager.

However, to enrich and ground the findings of the evaluation, the team has prepared an in-depth case study of one CMC, in order to review indicators of success (management, content and use, governance, self assessment and sustainability) as they apply in a single context. The case study for Namma Dhvani CMC, Budikote, India is attached in Appendix 7.

## **B. Assessment**

Sections 1-2 focus on design and implementation of the initiative. Sections 3-6 cover outputs, shorter term outcomes, longer term development results and impacts: assessment of the programme logic compared to what really happened; unexpected benefits and missed opportunities.

### **1. On the design of the CMC initiative**

#### ***1.1 Existence of programme logic***

The programme logic (goal, objectives and activities stated above) is well established, although it was necessary to distill this logic from several official sources, including UNESCO's internal planning documents (32 C/5) and the proposals for Cooperation between Switzerland and UNESCO, 2001 and 2004. There is no single document that fully describes the programme logic, complete with timelines, outputs, outcomes and indicators of success. However, interviews with informants within the CI sector, and elsewhere in headquarters and UNESCO field offices, indicate that the programme logic is recognized by these stakeholders, with no significant differences in understanding or expectations.

The programme logic addresses two key issues of importance to UNESCO:

- Social inclusion for marginalized groups, to support their active participation in community development.
- Sustainability of the CMCs, through stated intentions to develop or support training, tools and partnerships. In particular, as reflected in documentation for the CMC initiative, the programme logic recognized the importance of knowledge sharing among the CMCs as necessary to ensure sustainability among groups of CMCs within a country or region.

However, what is absent from the programme logic is the strategic timeframe for the initiative. At what point does UNESCO decide to proceed with CMCs, and to what end? The long term plan for the CMC initiative within UNESCO is not commonly understood.

#### ***1.2 Programme logic for each CMC pilot***

Each CMC pilot is a project in and of itself, and the programme logic for each of these endeavours is very evident in the individual proposals for support and in the reports on progress. There is a clear pass through of the umbrella goal and objectives to the field level, with no inconsistencies noted. Among other objectives, each CMC is expected to address questions of sustainability. In the process of setting up each CMC, and through the training materials and regional workshops, CMS are also guided to address UNESCO's mainstreaming considerations -- the challenge of engaging women, youth, and other marginalized members of society. The success of including these considerations in the design stage for each CMC is clear from the outcomes noted below in Section 4.4.5.

### 1.3 Designed for Rapid results

As noted, the programme logic was distilled by the evaluation team from the documentation provided to the team. There does not exist in any one source a complete strategic plan for the initial CMC pilot phase. While a programme logic exists, the deliberative design was not conducted through more traditional approaches to programme development and implementation, such as Logical Framework Analysis or Results Based Management.

In the field of ICTs for development, the evaluation team has seen two approaches to introducing and supporting ICTs in community development:

- a) a slow evolution from individual groups interested in testing approaches to the creation of a formal network of organizations with an approved multiyear action plan (Global Knowledge Partnership).
- b) a more deliberative approach from the outset, with extensive programme frameworks set in place from the beginning (ACACIA).

The CMC initiative has taken neither of these approaches. Instead, this initiative has been developed along the lines of what has been called in the Harvard Business Review "Rapid Results Initiatives"<sup>4</sup>. Rapid-results initiatives are mini-projects injected into the stream of a larger project. Key elements of the rapid results approach include:

- o Small scale
- o Results oriented
- o Vertical integration (taking all the potential horizontal activities and testing them within the smaller activity, including processes, relationships and tools)
- o Rapid implementation to objective (within 100 days)

Each of the CMCs functions as a mini-project within the context of the overall CMC initiative. Although in some cases the timeframe may have been longer than anticipated, the emphasis on small scale, on immediate results (access to information, computer training and/or radio content development), and on getting the management structures, community relationships and national partnerships in place is consistent with "Rapid Results". Lessons learned from each of these "mini-projects" have served to inform and adapt the whole CMC initiative, including the development or revision of tools to support the centres.

Therefore, while there has been no formally drafted management plan for the CMC initiative that was established well in advance of programme implementation, the way that the CMC initiative has been developed has nevertheless demonstrated real strengths. Investment of time and effort has been made directly at the mini-project level, with immediate impacts, contributing to success for the CMC initiative as a whole. As one partner notes:

My feeling about UNESCO is that they're promoting it [CMCs] and providing equipment, but the more interesting thing is that they're not afraid to experiment; they allow individual initiatives to try and fail -- that really allows people to learn from their successes AND from failures.

It should be noted that the rapid results approach does need a supportive administrative environment that is tolerant of rapid decision making, risk, and immediate success as well as immediate failure. Also, even with Rapid Results approaches, a skeleton management plan is important to ensure that timelines for mini-projects are adhered to,

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<sup>4</sup> Nadim F. Matta and Ronald N. Ashkenas, "Why Good Projects Fail Anyway", Harvard Business Review, September 2003.

and that the results from the mini-projects are in fact aggregated into the larger project and into decision making on next steps. The absence of this basic plan may have contributed to the questions arising on UNESCO's long term interests in the CMC initiative, discussed in section 1.4; and to the larger challenges of intersectoral cooperation, discussed in section 5.2.

With respect to the next phase of the CMC initiative, the evaluators would suggest that as UNESCO is committed to Results Based Management approaches across its programmes, that an RBM Framework be developed to guide the initiative as it scales up. We would also suggest, however, based on the highly successful CMC experience, that for other pilots, more attention be given to Rapid Results approaches.

### **1.4 Sustainability of the CMC initiative**

The lead evaluator heard several conflicting messages from a number of informants within and outside of UNESCO Headquarters: that the initiative was considered a success and a flagship activity; but also that it has overshadowed other initiatives in the sector; and that there was real uncertainty about the future of initiative.<sup>5</sup> The team notes that the sustainability question tends to be viewed in the context of the life span of individual centres established through this initiative. What is not clear is the sustainability of the initiative itself – of UNESCO's own commitment to and support for CMCs as a potential core tool to deliver on UNESCO's mandate. As one key informant notes, no consideration in the design of the initiative was given to a "closed exit point for the pilot programme". Absent from the programme logic is a strategic timeframe for the initiative, with benchmarks to assess the value of the initiative to UNESCO itself against UNESCO's longer term interests.

Within UNESCO, there appear to be several strongly held views on what UNESCO's longer term interests might be:

1. That it is UNESCO's role to create and test models for education, cultural and communications practices that other agencies can then implement on a larger scale, with no further involvement of UNESCO.
2. That it is not clear whether such models can be "scaled-up" and that the creation and testing phase is not complete until a full scale-up has been implemented; thus requiring further investment of UNESCO in the initiative; but still with the ultimate intention of no longer supporting CMC development.
3. That UNESCO itself needs such centres as development platforms in marginalized areas to promote UNESCO's mandates in science, education, culture and communications; and for UNESCO to take on an important partnership role with other UN agencies that need such platforms for their own purposes.

None of these positions is currently addressed in the existing programme logic for the CMC initiative. The evaluators suggest that there is a significant lack of clarity on UNESCO's own strategic interests. Is UNESCO simply testing, promoting and withdrawing from a model that others may or may not choose to adopt; does it intend to support current and new CMCs through training, networking and encouraging national policy change and international funding as a regular activity of the CI sector; will it go so far as to use these centres for the delivery of UNESCO and other UN agency programming?

In the opinion of the evaluation team, UNESCO needs to base the design of future CMC activities on a clear statement of its own strategic interests in the initiative. If it is not clear from the beginning how it wishes to either transfer or sustain a longer commitment

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<sup>5</sup> In the course of the final review of the report, the Sector contested the above statement as a misinterpretation of what was said.

to the initiative, UNESCO runs the risk of not securing the benefits of a very successful programme either for itself or other international agencies. The lessons will be lost.

## **2. On the implementation of the CMC initiative**

### ***2.1 On UNESCO's role, and the significance of the UNESCO intervention***

UNESCO is seen to be the initiator and implementer of the CMC concept by the centres themselves, by partners and by the broader community of ICT4D practitioners. UNESCO was commended by informants for ensuring that the programme was more than the donation of equipment; that it also ensured support for training and resource materials, and in particular, as one partner noted, that it emphasized the "thinking process of what it takes to create a sustainable environment with a business plan". There is strong support in particular for the programme management of the initiative. As one partner noted, programme management from HQ has been "very good to work with, very responsive, interactive". Two comments from a CMC informant and from a partner are indicative of this positive view of the initiative:

Basically, it has an excellent leadership... What we have seen of the programme is good, solid leadership and with practical advice; and also a willingness to really engage with development, within budget constraints. It's really created a real hub and potential for scale up.

[The initiative is] very professionally run, quite mature, well conceived in the sense that a lot of the lessons are there, and taken into account; the design is mature, the issues around ownership, issues around capacity building are well sorted through, and thus it's well rolled out.

The recognition that the CMC initiative has secured is evidence not only of good programme implementation, but also of good communications tactics to promote results. Although one partner considered that UNESCO might invest rather more than necessary on marketing and promotion of this initiative, nevertheless such investments are warranted to ensure that lessons from the CMC initiative are shared with other organizations. Participation in key fora such as the Global Knowledge Partnership and the World Summit on the Information Society have led to a return on investment in terms of significant profile and positioning for UNESCO as a strong, effective and valued actor in the field of communications and information technology for development.

### ***2.2 Existence of Implementation Strategy, including transfer of lessons and development of tools***

Consistent with a rapid results approach, the initiative proceeded quickly in the initiation of individual pilot CMCs, and was adaptive in the execution of its principal activities, including the development and refinement of tools for use by CMCs. Experience gained from the first CMCs is being transferred to new CMCs, not only by UNESCO staff but also by managers of CMCs themselves. For example, the manager of the CMC in Sengerema in Tanzania is assisting with the startup of the Kilosa CMC. CMC volunteers from the Tansen, Nepal CMC have moved to the Madanpokhara CMC to support training and evaluation activities. Regional meetings have been held (Ouagadougou, Dakar, Budikote) for sharing experience. The Bangladesh CMC continued a relationship with Budikote that was established at a regional workshop: "Because of the bilateral relationship we came to learn a lot from them about their daily management and execution system that we

adopted in the Youth CMC of Sitakund". Two tools have been developed as key mechanisms for sharing lessons: The Guide to CMCs: how to get started and keep going; and the Multimedia Training Kit.

However, beyond the transfer of knowledge at startup, making tools available and the occasional regional meeting, there has been limited ongoing direct interaction among CMCs within countries or regions. Mozambique CMCs commented that such interaction would be valuable to assist with comparing pricing for services, content for radio programming, the impact of seasonal visitors to the CMC, and so forth. It is possible that the lack of regular interaction is a limitation of the rapid results approach. Each CMC was established fairly independently of others, each evolving quickly under somewhat unique circumstances, so that the CMCs themselves do not see what they have in common, and therefore do not automatically gravitate towards sharing of experience. Lack of resources for travel and staff exchanges contribute to the limited interaction. Also, the pressures on CMC managers to ensure financial sustainability and to manage programming and staff are significant, and would appear to take immediate priority over investing time in knowledge sharing with other centres. Mutual support networking tools will be discussed further in Section 4, under "Outcomes for the communities".

Where we have not yet seen an analysis of lessons learned has been with the breakdown of one or two pilots, such as Burkina Faso and one centre in Mali. The sense of the evaluator was that these CMCs, or at least the telecentre component, have simply been abandoned. In these circumstances, UNESCO needs to do a post mortem to understand in greater detail what went wrong, and manage the exit process with partners and the community. This has not yet happened to the best of our knowledge. In a rapid results initiative in particular, it is essential to identify quickly when things are breaking down to see whether and what kinds of intervention and assistance are possible. The role of UNESCO field offices in this process is crucial, but as discussed later in this report, we have some concerns about the unevenness of UNESCO's ownership of the CMC initiative at the field level. Should a centre not be salvageable, then closure is needed among those who committed to the project. There must be a culture of risk and experimentation promoted for these kinds of projects, that failure can be used for lessons that will help other centres in future.

A few CMCs raised concerns about UNESCO bureaucracy, with respect to the length of time involved to deliver on promises of funding; but once the funding was secured there were no other concerns with UNESCO management. One or two centres expressed a need for clarity on what UNESCO might be willing to support and what would fall outside of UNESCO's funding parameters. These requests usually involved securing some form of transportation for radio journalists to go to villages within the broadcast range of the CMC. Some CMCs interpreted suggestions from UNESCO for strengthening services as indications that UNESCO would also financially support those activities. From the Caribbean: "UNESCO can't suggest opportunities without also committing to funding." Often in a rapid results environment, opportunities may be identified that simply cannot be acted on within the timeframe or budgets available, but at the same time expectations may be raised within the "mini-project". This is a side effect of rapid results that needs to be monitored and addressed should it arise.

### ***2.3 Defined roles of partners and partner relations***

The evaluation team encountered no real concerns with the management of partners in the development of tools and other activities in the CMC initiative. Only one partner commented that there might be some overlap of mutual work and unnecessary competition on the ground. However, this was balanced by the recognition of the need for complementarity on the ground, and on shared values regarding communications,

community radio and development. In general, partners agreed that their experience with UNESCO was “very professional and creative”:

One of the things I like about UNESCO is that they try to cooperate with as many actors as possible; that’s a positive thing because you often see that each donor or actor protects his own program and wants to get the credit.

### **3. On outputs of the CMC initiative**

#### **3.1 General Observations**

UNESCO set out to establish pilot CMCs in at least eight least developed countries in Africa and in selected countries in South Asia and the Caribbean, with equipment and material resources for radio production and access to the Internet and other ICTs, to develop tools to support the CMC managers and community communications facilitators, to have trained managers and community communications facilitators in place, to foster CMC networks in the project countries and to have monitoring and evaluation system in each country. In general, UNESCO has achieved its targets for establishing CMCs and for developing appropriate tools and ensuring that trained managers are in place. UNESCO’s efforts have not yet led to the emergence of national networks, and more work is needed to put monitoring and evaluation systems in place at the country level.

#### **3.2 Specific comments**

A full list of CMCs established is attached in Appendix 4. In brief, at the time of writing, CMCs have been set up in seven out of the target of eight countries in Africa: Mali, Benin, Mozambique, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Uganda<sup>6</sup>. CMCs exist in five countries in South Asia (Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka) and seven countries in the predominantly Caribbean region (Cuba, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Dominica, Suriname and Guyana.) ICT components are not yet operational in CMCs in Barbados and Ghana; community radio components are not fully operational in one CMC in Ghana and in Bangladesh, and one centre in Benin has not yet begun to deliver content through the radio. Real instability was noted only in two CMCs in Mali, and in the CMC in Burkina Faso, where the telecentre functions are no longer operational. For one of the two centres in Mali, it is hoped that this is only a temporary set back.

The majority of CMCs have the equipment and related resources for radio production and access to the Internet and other information technologies and services. Access to local content has been achieved primarily through radio broadcasting, although many CMCs have also established websites promoting local information, events and radio programming. The majority of CMCs offer a full range of ICT applications, including access to Internet (web, email, chat), computer training, digital radio and video production, printing, word processing, scanning, photocopying, and in some cases even public telephone services. Where Internet connections have broken down, the remaining telecentre services continue to provide support to the CMC.

The following tools have been developed:

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<sup>6</sup> As of August, Khombole CMC has now opened in Senegal.

- Guide to CMC: How to get started and keep going
- Multimedia Training Kit
- eNRICH (software tool)
- Ethnographic Action Research

Given that all CMCs have been built on preexisting facilities, in most cases trained managers were already in place. Where radio broadcasting was added to an existing telecentre, we noted in some cases (for example, Uganda) a need for further training in community communications. But in general, most CMCs have in place community communications facilitators.

Where the CMC initiative has not yet achieved its full potential is in the fostering of national networks and the related measurement and evaluation systems at the country level, nor has UNESCO secured and invested funding and staff time specifically towards the establishment of networks. It was hoped that at least within the Caribbean the CMC initiative could capitalize on existing regional cooperation and community radio networks, and certainly within this region there is greater awareness of the activities of other centres in the region, but this has not yet led to a CMC network per se. While there is the occasional, ad hoc interaction among CMCs within countries (for example, in Nepal and Mozambique and Mali), it has not evolved on its own into national networks of CMCs, with steering committees. Barriers to this, and suggestions for progress, will be discussed in the next section. Measurement and assessment systems at the country level cannot be established without a national network mechanism to support them. Of greater concern is the still very limited capacity within many CMCs to systematically monitor and evaluate activities and use of the CMC.

## **4. On Outcomes for the Communities: the CMC model**

### **4.1 General observations**

The programme logic anticipated that a principal outcome would be a well functioning CMC model that supports community development and is sustainable.

At the heart of the CMC initiative is a fairly simple hypothesis: The addition of Internet connectivity and other information technology tools to an established community radio station; or the addition of radio broadcasting capabilities to a telecentre, can help the established facility to significantly increase its contributions to community development, as defined not only in terms of strengthening economic opportunities through information and training, but also through strengthening social inclusion, governance, education, medical services, and other activities necessary to healthy and sustainable communities.

In the opinion of the evaluation team, we have observed solid confirmation of this hypothesis in a number of locations: Mozambique, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. While it may still be rather early to draw conclusions, we also see the potential for real success in Bangladesh and Ghana. Experience in Mali, Benin and Uganda is mixed, although one of the centres in Mali is performing at the same level of success as those in Tanzania and Mozambique; with Burkina Faso appearing to be one of the least successful of the pilots. Barbados is a special case, where a broadcast training programme has been established at the college as a training incubator for CMCs. The addition of the telecentre component to the existing broadcast facility, when established, may serve only to support students in the programme.

The following section explores in more detail the strengths and challenges facing CMCs. We also remind the readers that the case study of the Budikote CMC in India, appended to this report, provides a more in-depth examination of how the model can be utilized.

## **4.2 Effective, Equitable, Accountable and Transparent Governance**

Arrangements for hosting and ownership of the CMCs vary widely:

- Owned by a local administration (village development committee)
- Established as a community cooperative
- Owned by an local NGO/CBO with a management board established for the sole purpose of operating the facility
- Managed by a national government department
- Managed by an educational facility (college or school)
- Owned by a development oriented NGO [Budikote/Myrada; Guyana/IWOKRMAMA; Bangladesh/Youth Power in Social Action]

We have observed that for a majority of centres, the hosting organization has provided a good home for stability and support for the CMC: India, Guyana, Bangladesh, Nepal, Jamaica, Trinidad, Uganda, Mali, Ghana and Mozambique. In only a few situations were there real challenges (individual centres in Mali, Benin and Uganda) where administrative approvals for operations have become barriers to effective operations and decision-making. Sengerema, Tanzania, noted that its national management committee had ceased to be active in the governance of the CMC. In the case of Sengerema, it is a sign of maturity of the CMC that it is now seeking to establish itself as a community based cooperative, independent of the government department that has fostered it. A key driver was the desire for the CMC to manage its own finances rather than submit revenues and claim expenses from COSTECH, the government department managing it. Sri Lankan CMCs have also had to navigate the challenge of being owned by the national government but accountable to the local community.

While UNESCO has suggested that an indicator of good governance is that the Centres become self-owned and self-managed, the evaluation team observes that this is not always either possible or even desirable. The team observed a correlation between the success of a CMC in meeting community information needs, and its relationship with a development –oriented NGO or other locally based institution. Not only did the latter provide stability and support, it also was able to focus CMC activities on a development agenda. From an informant: “Where they work best is where they quite clearly align with other community based organizations providing services.”

While ownership (including fiscal and programming accountability) may remain with another institution, the CMCs in many cases have found ways to establish community based steering committees to ensure the CMC is serving community interests. The composition and active involvement of the steering committee demonstrate that the CMC is embedded in the community as a strong and vital community institution. This is clearly the case in Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad, Sri Lanka, India, Ghana, at least one in Uganda and Mali, and in Tanzania. In Benin, the union of cotton producers, the church, the local government administration, and the credit union are among those represented on the local management committee. Sengerema likewise is building its steering committee with representatives of the education sector, district government, the local hospital, the independent sector, and others.

Representation of marginalized groups and gender balance is still not uniformly addressed in CMC governance arrangements; although in all cases there is at least some representation of women. However, we note that systemic barriers to women's participation in decision making affect the CMCs like most other community institutions.

- The management of CMC cooperatives is drawn from the shareholders of the cooperative; but women usually do not have the financial resources to be able to buy shares of their own, automatically excluding them from decision making roles within the coop.
- Steering Committees for CMCs are often based on institutional representation, drawing from community leadership at the local schools, district councils, health facilities, and so forth. However, there are few women in these leadership positions, and so participation of women on the CMC steering committees is limited.

CMCs do attempt to address this by setting aside “seats” within their governance structures specifically for women representatives; but there is some distance to go before many of these CMCs have equal opportunities for women to participate in their governance.

It is the exception rather than the rule that governance structures for a CMC have broken down. Only in one situation in Mali, where the telecentre component was not well integrated with the radio component, we found that the management board met infrequently and irregularly and without the manager of the telecentre being present. The absence of statutes that defined the role of the actors clearly, and weak governance in general, exacerbated the [negative] financial situation.

We have also not seen success with more complicated operating arrangements, where the telecentre has been tied to a college radio training program or where the telecentre has been established inside a local hotel business, with a relationship (not yet operative) to offer radio browsing programmes on a local commercial FM station nearby. With the former, there is very little tie in to community development: students are primarily interested in developing entertainment or news programming. With the latter, the arrangement is tenuous at best, with lower visibility for the “CMC” within the community. While these have been useful and informative experiments, the main lesson would be in future to support arrangements consistent with the basic model: adding a telecentre directly to a community radio station with a development agenda, or adding radio broadcasting capacity to an existing public telecentre.

Guyana, Nepal, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique are all in various stages of exploring and strengthening their ownership and governance arrangements. The cooperative model has attracted a great deal of attention in Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda, and we would encourage UNESCO to explore this further. In broad terms, a cooperative is *an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise*<sup>7</sup>. The cooperative approach to CMCs combines community ownership and accountability with a financial model to sustain centre operations through the sale of shares in the enterprise. UNESCO should give some consideration to partnering with the International Cooperative Association ([www.ica.coop](http://www.ica.coop)) to provide models and management planning to CMCs interested in exploring this approach to community ownership and financial sustainability.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ica.coop/>

## **4.3 Effective and efficient management structure**

### **4.3.1 Integration of radio and telecentre components**

As this is a leverage initiative through which UNESCO has supported the addition of a communications technology to an existing facility, we looked first at whether the integration of the two components has been well managed.

In most cases, CMCs noted that the new technology brought with it new challenges. The learning curve has been steep and unexpected for some. Most noted that management decision-making with respect to financial arrangements, staff training and equipment servicing, has become more complex. Nevertheless, in most cases there are now good synergies between the two types of service. Even in situations where the telecentre is in a different physical location from the radio (Guyana and Lumbini, Nepal, for example), efforts are still made to ensure that radio staff participate in computer training and have access to the Internet for research and to the computers for enhancing the production qualities of their programmes. Telecentre staff develop radio programs that provide listeners with information from the Internet. In all functional CMCs, the radio has been an invaluable channel for marketing the telecentre services and training programmes. In Benin, the synergy of the two media was noted:

L'introduction de la composante télécentre à été une source complémentaire de ressources financières et d'information pour la radio. Le manager du CMC estime que les ressources du télécentre ont stabilisé la situation financière de la radio.

An important success factor has been the existence of good management oversight of the combined functions, usually through a single manager or a board member supervising both the radio and telecentre operations. The more separated the two components the less successful the CMC has been overall.

We would suggest that in some cases, the telecentres that have added radio to their operations may have a stronger development programming orientation. Radio stations that have added telecentres seem in some cases to treat the telecentre as more of a technology upgrade – providing digital processing capacity for radio and cable programs -- and also as an opportunity to diversify revenue streams. While the radio coverage is usually superb, it comes from a more journalistic approach than a community activist approach. Consequently, the radio stations are missing opportunities to work, for example, with schools, with health professionals, with other development NGOs and CBOs. They will broadcast development programming from other sources but they do not necessarily develop it themselves. Programming concentrates more on coverage of community events, local music and arts, local government debates, and so forth. Telecentres on the other hand seem to be more aware of the possibilities, and are actively pursuing partnerships with other community institutions. This may be due to the history of telecentres, created with significantly greater resources (in terms of outside technical and financial support), but also with the orientation to community institutional partnerships and support instilled from the beginning.

This difference should be kept in mind for future CMCs to be set up by UNESCO or other agencies: if a telecentre is to be added to an existing radio station, some additional training may be necessary to help the radio station develop a stronger orientation to partnering with other institutions on development projects and services.

### 4.3.2 Human resources, training needs and tools

Without exception, all CMCs noted varying degrees of challenges with human resources: recruitment, management, and training of staff and volunteers; lack of sufficient numbers of employed staff for continuity of operations [depth of management structure], low morale linked to low levels of remuneration; technical skill sets required, including English, French, Spanish or Portuguese language competency for Internet research. Most CMCs recruit volunteers; promoting the most accomplished into staff positions; and occasionally with those staff transitioning to better paid positions elsewhere.

Of particular concern is the dependency in most centres on a single person who works 24/7. There is limited resilience with respect to staffing in most CMCs, with the exceptions of those that are attached to a larger NGO, and those larger, well established community radio stations like Lumbini, Nepal. In longer term planning for CMCs, consideration needs to be given to building up a "middle management" level for the centres to take some of the day to day operations burden off centre managers so they can focus on strategic planning, community ownership and diversification of funding. The risk factor in losing the manager can also be mitigated through a strong and involved local steering committee or through a management model in which the CMC is hosted/owned by a locally based NGO or other community organization.

Support for the CMC manager is a key staff development challenge that must be monitored carefully both in established CMCs and those that are just now being set up under scale-up. We see three other more general staff development challenges for CMCs.

- Who needs training;
- What do they need training in; and
- How can they best be trained?

#### 1. Who needs to be trained?

##### a. Professional development plans for CMC staff

Centre managers acknowledge the need to help staff with keeping up to date with new approaches. Peer to peer education and experiential learning opportunities could be very successful. We think there may be some real value in fostering staff exchanges among CMCs, where training and content production staff have a chance to go to another centre to observe for a while. Networking among staff with similar responsibilities should be initiated using online tools, much as the Ethnographic Action Researchers have access to their own central website to ask questions and share observations. Online courses for staff should also be developed. For example, while the Guide to CMCs and the Multimedia Training Kit are useful, the knowledge in those kits may be more effectively transmitted in a more structured learning environment, with a group of participants interacting with each other and an instructor.

##### b. Training technical experts in development

On several occasions, CMCs commented on the difficulty of securing good technical support in rural areas. Technicians do not want to travel to remote areas to handle installations, maintenance and repairs, let alone live there full time. We think this is reflective of an ongoing gap in most countries between technology (presuming positive characteristics of urban, progressive, professional elites) and development (presuming negative characteristics of poor, rural, "backwards" communities). Tanzanian informants suggested that there may be real opportunities to work with urban Internet café owners

and other private suppliers to build their interest in development challenges and the positive aspects of rural life. Equally interesting was the suggestion that development courses be introduced as part of technical/computer degree programs at universities and colleges. UNESCO may be well positioned to influence higher education facilities and national education departments to consider this suggestion.

## 2. What do staff need training in?

The following is a brief inventory of training needs identified by CMC informants. We have grouped these into three major areas for consideration for future programming by UNESCO to support CMCs:

### a. **Becoming development agents within the community: delivery on the goals and objectives of the CMC**

- Community mobilization (creating self help groups and increasing community participation in decision making)
- Radio content development
- Marketing and outreach
- Although not explicitly stated, we would also add to this list how to diversify training programs, to move beyond training on how to use computers into computer assisted learning on a wide range of development issues and opportunities.

### b. **Strengthening operational efficiencies and sustainability**

- Fundraising
- Business planning
- Management skills
- Technical skills, including trouble shooting

### c. **Individual skills development**

- Radio presenting skills
- Training for trainers

## 3. How can they best be trained?

UNESCO has identified the need for a suite of tools that would help CMCs address a range of capacity needs:

- The Guide to CMCs: how to get started and keep going: to address basic operations, staffing and management of centres
- Multimedia Training Kit: to help centres with radio and other digital content production<sup>8</sup>
- eNRICH: a software tool to help CMCs mitigate high connectivity costs or unstable connections, by helping them download and organize information for offline use
- Ethnographic Action Research: to help CMCs assess community needs and design appropriate programs

Having a suite of tools has allowed CMCs to work with those most useful to their immediate needs. It should be noted at the time of the evaluation, translations of English language tools were not yet available; and that not all tools have yet been distributed to all Centres. For example, eNRICH is still in beta testing mode with a few South Asian CMCs. Nevertheless, about 50% of the CMC informants made use of at least

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<sup>8</sup> A separate evaluation of the Multi Media Training Kit was commissioned in 2005.

one tool developed by UNESCO. Most use of the tools, in particular the Multimedia Training Kit, eNRICH, and Ethnographic Action Research, was by South Asia CMCs. Some CMCs in Africa also made use of the Training Kit. It would appear that few CMCs used the Guide to CMCs: how to get started and keep going. A number of CMCs acknowledged that making the tools available in other languages would be helpful. From Bangladesh: "Most of the good training materials and modules of community media skills being in English takes out a lot of time for the CMC manager for translation, development and adaptation in the local context".

A Caribbean CMC was concerned that centres still lack capacity to make full use of the tools: "you can read [the book], it makes sense, but we still go "but how?" You can say "go take a bath, but if you don't have soap and water, you still can't take a bath". This, in the opinion of the evaluation team, helps to make the case for more formal online training courses and for peer to peer networking.

### 4.3.3 Management of volunteers

The introduction of volunteers to take on most of the operations of CMCs was an innovation introduced in the Kothmale prototype. Most CMCs have volunteer support, with the exception of Lumbini, Nepal, where most staff are on some kind of salary basis.

We have three concerns about the use of volunteers in CMCs

#### a. Volunteerism as a new concept in developing countries

We find that UNESCO's encouragement of the use of volunteers while at the same time advocating that CMCs pursue revenue generating opportunities is sending mixed messages to CMCs. Centres are being held to a business standard that is dependent on free labour for its success.

Tanzania adds to the debate that there is an inherent contradiction in asking people to donate time without economic benefit to a centre that has poverty alleviation as an important objective. In Nepal, volunteerism is also a fairly new concept. It is accepted when it is linked to learning, but other types of volunteering, at hospitals or through social clubs (Rotary, Lions, Jaycees) are still new, and there is limited acceptance of this. Revenue generation is in some CMCs beginning to be a source of conflict between volunteers and CMC managers. In Tansen, volunteers believe that if the CMC gets NPR3000 for a video production, then the volunteers who shot and edited the video should get at least 50%. Now they get much less, and they find it a disincentive to work at the CMC. Families of volunteers accepted the value of training, but now expect the volunteers to find work. Continuing to "hang out" at the CMC after training can be a source of conflict with the family.

The evaluation team has looked quickly into the issue of volunteerism in developing countries. We have attached a useful reading list on the topic in Appendix 8. We would encourage UNESCO to review this challenge more systematically and develop recommendations on how to promote the use of volunteers in future UNESCO supported activities.

#### b. Incentives for volunteers

Some incentives are inherent to CMCs: access to training, to computer time, to equipment for radio and video production; gaining visibility in the community and in particular recognition for young people and women doing the training or broadcasting the radio programmes. Other incentives, such as providing bus fares to get to the centre, or giving music tapes or CDs, or blank CDs so that they can make and keep

copies of their own work, must be more proactively identified and costed into annual budgets.

### **c. Management of the volunteer cycle**

The Bangladesh CMC described the challenge most eloquently:

Our focus is on rural poor youths and adolescents, more of them drop out during the [training] process as they have other priorities such as ensuring daily living. So, a number of them drop out regularly after or during their training and learning period. This harms the formation of a team, content development, dissemination and other day to day activities; it also increases the investment of time and finance for the training as the newly recruited ones requires to be retrained.

CMCs would benefit from targeted advice and training (a short e-conference, for example) on how to manage turnover of volunteers to ensure transfer of knowledge and to mitigate impacts on CMC operations.

## **4.4 Content of programming and types of services appropriate to community needs**

It is here that the evaluation team sees the real success of the CMC initiative. In the opinion of the team leader, the CMC initiative is one of those rare projects in which it is possible to directly attribute a communications activity to a development result on the ground. The list of examples from CMC informants of how community access to information has truly met community needs is extensive and consistent across regions and types of CMCs. In site visits, we triangulated the interview process, talking not only with centre managers and staff, but also with steering committees, with telecentre users and radio listeners. We found consistency on this point across all interviews. In all CMCs with active radio or cable programmes, informants noted the direct benefits of programming to communities and described in detail how communities provide input. Radio staff commented on how they were able to significantly improve their programmes by doing research on the Internet.

The evaluation team could observe that telecentre users were accessing the Internet for research and to find out what is going on in the world, email and chat for contacting relatives and friends, and business centre services for printing, copying, etc. We did note some distinctions in how the Internet was being used by different groups. Development workers and local government administrators from the community, and the radio program staff, would use the Internet for research. Those who already had established local businesses would use the Internet to learn more about their markets or to get ideas for strengthening or expanding their business. The balance used the Internet for personal and social priorities more than for economic/business activities. Young people in particular predominantly focused on chat rooms (the young women, even those in fairly conservative cultures, were particularly enthusiastic about chatting online with strangers in other locations).

We agree with UNESCO informants that this vindicates the hybrid approach, which both respects the choices of local people to reinforce and enrich the social and cultural dimensions of their lives, but at the same time enables “mediators” – radio programme staff and development workers -- to take Internet beyond personal and social use, and apply the information found therein to solving local development challenges.

In the space available, we can share only a few examples of the benefits to the communities:

From Benin:

- Increase in the rate of schooling of girls as a result of campaigns carried out by radio (organization of contests of schools registering the most girls)
- Cultural development: the number of local bands increased from 5 to 78; with music cassettes produced and distributed by the CMC, leading to exposure on national television

From Uganda:

- Agriculture and animal husbandry are the most popular topics for the Uganda CMC. The CMC uses the local association of agricultural workers to answer questions on the radio; Farmers use the radio but they also now request to have the information on video and DVD.
- Business management -- how to start a small business – is popular with women

From Tanzania:

- Increases in immunizations as a result of radio campaigns
- Listeners' clubs set a target that no child under five should die of malaria, and used club revenues to purchase treated mosquito nets, based on radio programming
- Local artisans download design catalogues (for example, from IKEA) to improve the quality and consistency of their goods
- The District Commission uses radio to persuade women to run for local office; more women are now contesting elections as a result

From Nepal:

- Technical expertise is breaking down traditional social barriers:
  - Lower caste videographers are being used to film upper caste ceremonies.
  - Lower caste youth are now training upper caste housewives.
  - Lower caste youth get their names on TV programs – gaining community recognition and acceptance through TV
- Women say that their husbands want them to take computer training so that they can help in the family business with word processing, spreadsheets and marketing.

As a direct outcome of CMC radio or cable programming, villagers demonstrated a growing awareness that they had the power to get their village or district administrations to act in their development interests, with respect to improved health services, improved education, infrastructure, and so forth. They listen to the radio programming to learn what might be improved in their lives; they then either deal directly with their local government or they send their views and concerns back to the CMC, which then broadcasts these and in doing so exerts pressure on the local government on behalf of their listeners.

While some UNESCO informants are skeptical that rural villagers use the Internet to access weather reports or market prices, the evaluation team has found that CMCs play a valued intermediary role. Individual farmers don't come in to download the information, but the CMC staff do and then they broadcast it on the radio and print out for posting on the walls of the CMCs. "Wall newspapers" downloaded from the net have become very popular. In many cases, the CMC is seen to be the community's window to the world.

Out of an abundance of stories and experience, we would like to focus UNESCO's attention on seven issues and opportunities arising from the research.

#### **4.4.1 Building on existing channels for communications within the community**

In India, the evaluator observed that the self help groups already had ways to exchange and record information, and that the CMC was succeeding in tying into those pre-existing channels for communication. This suggests that CMCs might all benefit from undertaking a “communications audit” of their community: mapping out all the existing channels for learning, information exchange, and media in order to take advantage of how knowledge already flows through the community.

#### **4.4.2 The link to education**

User groups in site visits consistently noted that they felt they had no access to further education, and that the CMC provided a new opportunity to learn. Some certainly had the expectation that this training might lead to employment, but among others, it was simply the desire to gain new knowledge. Some questions were raised about whether the training certificates provided by the CMCs would be recognized by employers.

Most CMCs have not yet considered how they might become a link in distance education for their communities, to expand educational opportunities for villagers. UNESCO should work with CMCs to understand the wide range of distance education opportunities, how to identify those that might be relevant to their communities, and how to partner with local education bodies who might wish to include distance education courses in their own programming. Internally, UNESCO should look carefully at the implications of the CMCs playing a such strong role in education and adult learning, to take a more integrative approach to managing its wide range of grassroots centres for culture, learning, access to ICTs and CMCs.

#### **4.4.3 Local content development**

Access to new digital technologies has fostered local content development, primarily local music, stories, news and digital video. Some CMCs have their own websites.

Lack of content in local languages was mentioned only by Sri Lanka as a challenge. Most CMCs made a distinction between creating local content for radio and accessing international content through the Internet. Focus groups of users revealed that most were not using the Internet to find local content but rather for email and international news. Some noted in passing that they also used the web to find stories about local artists and film stars, examination scores; national news and local funding opportunities.

#### **4.4.4 Social mobilization through listeners clubs and self help groups**

It is our understanding that the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Guide to CMCs will include guidance on how to establish listeners clubs that also function as microcredit “self help groups”. We think this is worth even more attention. Future regional workshops and e-conferences should have sessions devoted specifically to the success that some CMCs have had in supporting these self help groups. The concept is simple: village members pay a small annual fee to join the club; the club makes small loans from the income and charges nominal interest; interest earnings are then invested in community projects that are chosen based on what they have learned from radio programming. In Nepal, listeners clubs have their own radio program called “community speaks”, with the topic of each program suggested by the clubs. Listeners clubs are proving to be an extremely effective

way to ground the CMC in the community, to ensure that the CMC is responsive to user interests, and to link the CMC directly into poverty alleviation activities.

#### **4.4.5 Social inclusion: addressing UNESCO's mainstreaming considerations for marginalized groups, gender, and youth**

The evaluation team observed some general trends. All CMCs appear to have made deliberative efforts to develop programmes relevant to marginalized groups, women and youth, and to encourage use of telecentre facilities. In at least 50% of the CMCs, we heard stories of changes in social standing of individuals and groups active in CMC listeners clubs, training programs or volunteering at the centre. Participation in non-traditional activities like radio and computer training has served to give individuals from traditionally marginalized groups more standing in their families and communities. According to the CMCs, changes are particularly noticeable with women active in radio, who are now seen to be sources of information and more connected with the "outside" world. But exciting as this social transformation is, there may still be underlying limits to acceptable levels of involvement that will need to be monitored over time. In Nepal, for example, we heard the analogy to "cold rice at home": if women are too active outside of the home, the family will have only "cold rice" for dinner.

There are some variations in outcomes, usually along age lines. Telecentre services are used more by older men than older women. This gender gap narrows considerably among younger users. In most countries, young people often consider the CMC as a social gathering point, and come in groups to send emails and surf. In Benin, few women use the telecentre. In India, the entire CMC programme targets women; and in Bangladesh, the CMC targets youth. Listeners clubs tend to be fairly balanced between genders, and women are active consumers of radio programming.

Two barriers to the participation of women in using the telecentre facilities came to light in this study:

- Lower education and literacy levels of women, compounded by the misconception that "ICTs can only be accessed by people who went to school".
- Household commitments: women "have a lot of work to do in their homes, from very early in the morning to very late at night".

However, the women who do come tend to look for information on farming techniques; improvements in selling their products; how to start small scale businesses; how to connect to microfinancing institutions for loans. Where women have been deliberately targeted for computer training programmes, CMCs have noted an increase in ongoing use of the CMC by women, their families and friends. In Nepal, women were particularly interested in sharing their new skills with other women.

#### **4.4.6 Environmental management as an overlooked niche**

Only one CMC specifically mentioned programming related to local environmental concerns. Staff were making a concerted effort to address a full range of topics: reforestation, conservation, water source protection, avoiding heavy equipment for road building<sup>9</sup>, recycling of plastics and so forth. CMCs may find that developing environmental programming may open doors to new funding opportunities, as well as lead to more sustainable development within their communities.

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<sup>9</sup> Use of backhoes, graders and other equipment can accelerate erosion.

#### **4.4.7 Library services as a new opportunity**

Some CMCs have begun to build small libraries of computer manuals and information CDs. In communities where there may be no other public library facility available, it would be interesting to begin to use the CMC not only for the delivery of digital content, but also for initiating new lending and exchange libraries for other types of development information.

#### **4.5 Evaluation capacity**

Except for those CMCs where UNESCO is testing Ethnographic Action Research (providing technical expertise and funds for the researchers at individual CMCs and for research coordination) the evaluation team notes that CMCs have almost no capacity for monitoring or evaluation. In Trinidad and Tobago, the CMC manager does collect a statistical report on use of the centre, only to note that "I haven't looked at it recently". Mozambique CMCs do carry out surveys and contacts with the community on a regular basis in order to assess perceptions and needs to improve services provision – but this was more the exception than the rule among CMCs.

The parameters of this evaluation did not include an evaluation of the Ethnographic Action Research methodology per se. However, the evaluator for Nepal was able to observe its use in Nepal CMCs. It was found to be an intriguing methodology that has helped the centres to more carefully identify marginalized groups who might benefit from the training and resources of the CMC; and to more systematically record observations of centre use, that are then analyzed to improve programming and services. But, we also have to note that EAR is an intensive process; without the financial and technical support for researchers and training, it is highly unlikely that other CMCs will adopt it. It is too early to determine whether, once UNESCO's support for EAR is concluded, the south Asian CMCs will continue to practice it. We are not aware of any CMCs trained in EAR that are continuing to use it without any further support from UNESCO.

A much simpler process for self assessment and planning needs to be developed by the CMCs themselves that takes into consideration the limited time available for this task. Some key points might be distilled from EAR, based on how it is currently being used. In Mozambique, we found that "management tools (like spreadsheets, management procedures, statistics) introduced during the pilot project phase are still being used and to a certain degree compensate for the lack of management capacity and skills of the staff, especially to keep record of the centres' activity". These simple management tools (basic statistics, evaluation forms for training, listener and user surveys) need to be introduced during the startup phase to help CMCs make management decisions quickly and with some confidence.

#### **4.6 Sustainability**

UNESCO has not clearly defined what "sustainability" means for CMCs, although there is a preponderance of opinion that it means "self-supporting", with no further financial inputs or technical support from UNESCO or indeed from the rest of the donor community. Some UNESCO informants believe that it would be "worrying" if all activities at a CMC were donor driven. And yet, the peer group has observed that "far too often donors try to impose business models on institutions that we would never try to do with similar institutions at home – crisis centres, libraries, other social agencies, and the like." A few UNESCO informants believe that UNESCO has not resolved the business model approach to CMCs, and that CMCs should be considered to be a social good, supported by government, like education or public broadcasting. And CMC managers themselves

believe that long term sustainability depends on many more factors than simple revenue generation. From Mozambique: “it is important to highlight different aspects that are determinant for long term sustainability rather than focusing mainly in the financial sustainability of the CMCs.”

The evaluation team suggests that more concerted attention be paid to what should be the balance between income generating activities and not for profit services supported by government and donors; and what other factors are required for sustainability beyond the bottom line. The following section explores a number of facets of the sustainability question that should be factored into determining how CMCs should achieve sustainability.

#### 4.6.1 Initial costs in creating a CMC

All CMCs have expressed their gratitude for the support they have received from UNESCO. Nevertheless, there is some concern expressed by the evaluation team, partners and peers that the set-up costs for a CMC have been underestimated, leading to longer term challenges in trying to grow and sustain the centres. Some centres noted that a full technical needs assessment should be done, that would catch some unexpected issues such as the need for a generator to help offset power outages. For centres trying to reach villages that are off the power grid (listening to broadcasts on battery operated or windup radios), it is particularly difficult to build and retain audience share if the broadcasts cannot be delivered reliably at the same time every day.

Local transportation costs also need to be calculated. Building a radio audience and initiating the social mobilizing activities requires transportation out to surrounding villages in the broadcast area. One CMC at least is investigating how they might acquire a motor scooter for use by CMC staff. At the very least, these transportation costs need to be included in a full cost assessment for a new CMC.

From peers:

We had some concerns about UNESCO under-funding coordination and testing and measurement and evaluation; and possibly also training of trainers. We felt like it might not be fully sustainable; just writing materials and putting them on line are steps 1 and 2 out of 10 steps that should happen to ensure sustainability;

UNESCO promotes that CMCs can be founded with €20,000, I think they should at least double that; €50 000 would be more realistic, at least in a country like Mali; for equipment [€20,000 is] about right, but on the side of knowledge sharing, networking and capacity building it is not enough.

Site visits to Mali also indicate that from a straight financial assessment, the simple provision of equipment and tools is not enough. The evaluator for Mali and Benin recommends that UNESCO should invest funds for the “couverture du déficit d’exploitation prévisionnel pendant quelque mois”. This working capital would help the centre to cover its expenses (such as licensing, connectivity, power, maintenance, marketing, staff and incentives for volunteers) while more systematically expanding its user base and diversifying its revenue, government and donor support.

Finally, the team notes that UNESCO is weak on its own accounting and reporting systems; in that it is not possible to get a unit cost for UNESCO’s own staff time (both across headquarters and field offices) invested in the CMC initiative, let alone break it down by country or individual CMC. For example, the investment in the Ethnographic Action Research project does not appear to be aggregated into the total cost of support

to South Asia CMCs, even though it is an important contribution to CMCs, and certainly in some form valuable for longer term sustainability. Given this internal accounting challenge at UNESCO, it is next to impossible to determine what the full costs are in setting up a CMC that include UNESCO's time and the cost of supporting activities. This alone should serve to call into question the assertion that CMCs can be successfully established for only €20,000.

#### 4.6.2 Technical challenges

The team noted a number of technical challenges that impact sustainability, primarily in terms of loss of radio audiences and Internet users and the related loss of revenue streams. This was best illustrated in Benin, where one CMC has had difficulty recovering from the combined disaster of lightening knocking out its radio transmission mast at the same time as the phone lines went down, cutting off its Internet access.

- Energy supply (power outages, load shedding, low voltage)
  - Less noted in the Caribbean, but a consistent problem in Africa, South Asia; in some cases being addressed through the purchase of generators and Universal Power Supply (UPS) systems, in some cases with solar powered batteries.
- Internet connection not reliable (or alternatives, if available, are too expensive)
  - Not mentioned in the Caribbean, but noted in all other locations
- Radio transmitter not powerful enough or signal being interfered with by other commercial stations; limiting range and therefore potential audience share
  - Less of an issue than Internet connectivity in most locations.
- Lack of trained technical staff or easy access to technical support for repairs and upgrades. In India, Tanzania and Bangladesh, managers commented in particular that technicians were not willing to travel to rural areas for service calls, making it necessary for CMC staff to take bulky equipment into cities for repairs.
- Equipment "security": the lack of backup transmitters and computer equipment in case of catastrophic equipment failure
  - This was a problem in all regions.
- Quality of equipment secured
  - In Bangladesh and Nepal they found that better quality video cameras led to better revenue streams
  - In Uganda, it was felt that the radio equipment was not robust enough: transmitters were breaking down after a couple of months; amplifiers didn't work very well; the antenna broadcast range was too short to make the CMC worth the effort.

Most CMCs noted that equipment maintenance, depreciation or amortization cannot be covered by their limited revenue streams. While most have been able to manage with their current technical configurations, concerns are being expressed now about what will be needed in terms of new equipment two to three years down the road. This gap in capacity for technical systems planning is an area worth addressing by UNESCO.

#### 4.6.3 Income Generating Activities

In assessing financial sustainability of CMCs it is necessary to consider the full costs of running these centres beyond equipment, licensing, software, energy and connectivity charges. Full costing would also take into consideration office space, staff and staff development, social programmes (such as setting up listeners clubs), acquisition of radio content from other content providers, building small technical libraries (computer manuals, CDRoms etc), and evaluation research. It is clear that no CMC is currently able

to cover its full costs entirely from the thin streams of revenues generated through sales of services. Even the Lumbini CMC in Nepal, which is one of the most robust, continues to receive grants for equipment and programming, and volunteers for technical assistance, from a variety of donor agencies. However, it is worth commending the business acumen of CMC managers in developing a diverse range of income generating activities:

- radio advertising and public service announcements,
- small charges for music requests and personal greetings,
- music tapes and video productions for local artists, for weddings, and other events
- renting music library for events
- dues from listeners clubs
- lifetime memberships
- training fees
- Internet access, including fees for receiving and printing emails for those in villages who have relatives in urban centres
- Loading information onto PDAs and loaning the PDAs for a small fee (for example, information for midwives)
- business centre services such as photocopying, scanning, faxing and printing. Simple investments in printers and phone services have helped to diversify revenue streams.

Most would appear to be recovering between 40% and 75% of their costs from these types of revenue streams and with the delivery of training and programming conducted by volunteers. In some cases, all operating costs are covered except for the salary of the CMC manager, the latter still paid by a hosting agency (a government department such as COSTECH in Tanzania, or an NGO such as IWOKRAMA in Guyana). In cases where a telecentre was added to an existing radio station, the introduction of ICTs added both a capital burden and continual connectivity charges. The addition of radio to a telecentre also increased capital asset costs, not only in terms of the basic console and antenna, but in terms of the needs for digital recorders for interviews, events coverage and music recording; and digital production equipment. Nevertheless, it is also clear from the evaluation that the addition of either the radio or the telecentre component has in most cases provided some additional revenues to stabilize the whole enterprise.

However, as noted in the Mozambique site visits:

**Efforts in achieving financial sustainability are forcing CMC managers to find ways of increasing turnover by giving emphasis to the paid services targeted to the sector of the population with purchasing power, losing the scope for activities targeted at poor and marginalized.**

#### **4.6.4 Diversification of financial support with a focus on programming**

The evaluation team observed several approaches to financing CMC operations and programmes beyond the payment for services business model. All of these need to be reviewed in more detail by UNESCO for capacity building purposes. CMCs need to be able to take advantage of those appropriate to their circumstances, and to ensure that the drive for financial stability does not undermine the mandate of CMCs to improve the quality of life of all citizens.

1. Creating a culture and skills for charitable donation solicitations and capital campaigns<sup>10</sup>
  - Madanpokhara, Nepal, CMC:
    - a. Listeners clubs collect from each house in the village a handful of rice or firewood for resale, or a rupee or two, to support CMC programming. The person who collects these contributions gets a share of the revenue, with the balance going to the Village Development Committee. The VDC gives the CMC between 50% and 80% of the balance, with the remaining funds used by the VDC for village development projects. CMC gives recognition to contributors.
    - b. Raised funds through a radio campaign and a community religious event to buy land and a building
    - c. Solicit donations from local groups like the District Coffee Organization
2. Creating small endowment funds
  - Madanpokhara puts the revenues from services into a bank account and uses the interest towards expenses. They estimate it will take 20 years to get sufficient funds in account to cover all expenses entirely from interest income, and will no longer need to depend on charitable donations.
3. Establishing the CMC as a Cooperative
  - Sengerema Tanzania is currently in the process of moving away from its ownership by the government agency COSTECH, to becoming a community cooperative, with members of the community buying shares in the coop. Interest on the share revenues will finance operations and programming of the CMC.
  - Lumbini CMC was originally established and continues to function as a cooperative. The capital from share purchases was recently used to finance a new building for the CMC. Savings on rent, plus some rental income from offices in the new building, will be used to replenish the capital account.
4. Either continuing to be hosted (and subsidized) as a programme of an established NGO or other community institution, or merging with one:
  - Integration into other ongoing ICT programmes like the Schoolnet in Namaacha

More established NGOs like Iwokrama and Myrada have the capacity to develop projects and raise funds that would allow the continuation of projects and services through the CMC. However, for those new CMCs that may be established with a host NGO, the host organization will need to be advised that the CMC will probably not be able to be financially self sufficient when the full costs are analyzed. The commitment to host will need to include the commitment to raise funds to support the development programming to be delivered through the CMC facility and staff.
5. Seeking funds directly for individual projects from the donor community
  - in Manhica, a project to develop a CDROM on malaria.

While some are very sophisticated in understanding how to diversify their donor funding base, the majority lack these skills. Many were unaware of how to develop projects and access funds managed by embassies in their capitals; let alone how to access funds from international foundations and development assistance agencies. Very few have tapped into international volunteer programs that might bring them

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<sup>10</sup> Solicitation of charitable donations is not without risks. Recently, Maoist insurgents in Nepal shot and killed a religious storyteller brought in to raise money for development projects as they believe that government should be providing all these services, and that people should not be asked to contribute from their own pocket.

trainers and technical experts. In some cases, UNESCO has been the first, and so far the only, donor. Training in proposal development and fundraising to support programmes and services is needed.

As a side note, we would also suggest that some sophistication in donor recognition be introduced. It was the exception rather than the rule that we observed CMCs making any visible acknowledgement of donor support on signs, plaques and information sheets. As the donor community becomes increasingly sensitive to accountability to its own financing constituencies, recipients will need to understand the importance of acknowledging support. Some thought should also be given to how to help CMCs represent the sources of their support in order to clarify UNESCO's role as a capacity building agency rather than as a funding agency.

#### 4.6.5 Local and National Partnerships

Many CMCs see opportunities for expansion of programming and services through partnerships with other local and national institutions: working with the local health authority on HIV Aids; with the schools on literacy and computer training; with local administrations on community participation in decision making. However, some (Uganda and Benin) noted that while they recognize the opportunity to support local administrations, they lack the technological resource and solutions (hardware and software) that can be used to meet the ICT demands of the local government.

CMCs identified several areas where more capacity building would be useful:

- Learning how to identify partnership opportunities, including planning for the incremental costs in terms of hardware and software to support new partners.
- Building a culture of partnership locally and nationally, including principles and guidelines on how to partner effectively, to ensure openness, transparency, responsiveness. In taking on the challenge of partnership training, some consideration will need to be given to the different legal status and governance structures of CMCs. For those CMCs operating under local village or government administrations, some believe that they cannot go on their own to find partners.
- Understanding how to identify and work with relevant government departments. Public institutions should consider using the CMCs to improve their public services, like electoral and civic education, seeking citizen participation, information for the private sector, health, education and others. CMCs need good "politicking" skills to connect into national departments and agencies.

#### 4.6.6 International partnerships

Less interest was expressed in forming relationships internationally, partly due to the difficulty in establishing these. Bangladesh commented extensively on how lack of international exposure was considered a significant obstacle to developing relationships with international institutions. They believe that visibility could be gained through demonstrating activities at international forums and programs. But travel costs are high, and there is no support for engaging at this level. Fees for joining international groups like the Global Knowledge Partnership and OneWorld were considered prohibitive. Information on partnerships with agencies like Hewlett Packard, Adobe, IDRC and the World Bank is difficult to find.

Of greater concern was the observation by a few CMCs (Uganda, Mali) that they feel hampered by the failure of other telecentres – that poor track records of some telecentres funded through other international initiatives have to an extent “poisoned the well.” This makes it all the more important for UNESCO to communicate the success of the CMC approach, in order to revitalize international support for these kinds of development platforms and vehicles.

#### 4.6.7 CMC Networking and Networks

From the early Kothmale workshop resolutions, CMC managers and stakeholders have said that national networks would be part of the solution to sustainability. In the evaluation, most informants see the potential of interaction with other CMCs in their country or region but lack the habits or resources (time, staff, funds for travel) to follow through. In a few cases like Mozambique and Mali, interaction between the CMCs happens on a regular basis. Guyana would like to strengthen ties with Radio TOCO. Benin CMCs would like to see more structure and planning for interaction among them. Tanzania stays in touch with some Ugandan CMCs but would like to do more of that.

There is a difference between establishing networks and networking. In programme documentation, UNESCO anticipated the creation of networks with national steering committees. This target is probably unrealistic at this stage of CMC development. More attention needs to be paid to fostering increasing levels of interaction among CMCs, to create a culture of networking that does not currently exist. The creation of more formal networks assumes that the managers of the CMCs will be the ones involved in the national network. In fact, at the country or regional level, efforts should be made to encourage interaction among all staff and volunteers of CMCs. Use by the South Asian Ethnographic action researchers of the website established by UNESCO to support them indicates that it is possible to foster these communities of practitioners with common responsibilities. Computer trainers, radio program production staff, and community animators establishing listeners clubs could all benefit from opportunities for more planned interaction. In some cases, such as Mali and Benin, simple first steps such as the provision of updated email contacts for CMC staff should be circulated. Networking does need to be fostered and facilitated, and UNESCO could play an important role in a new phase of CMC expansion by setting up supporting websites and hosting short email conferences and teleconferences among groups of CMC staff and volunteers either at national or regional levels. As one CMC informant notes, “There should be money in the programme that allows knowledge sharing among CMCs in the country, and makes networking more easy; that should help a lot.”

There is still a place for more formal networks, but we see it more in the context of establishing a critical mass of CMCs for new donor investments than for knowledge sharing and capacity building. The Uganda CMC notes, “We don’t know how to access information about how to initiate contact with these organizations; some of them are so bureaucratic that you don’t know where to start; some have very complicated proposal structures...We are supposed to be in a network of 6 CMCs in Uganda but the network hasn’t really been established; most of the centres are working on their own; so if you work as a small unit, a rural CMC, when they weigh you, they don’t see you as a strong collaborator; if we could strengthen the network, that would give us more opportunities for partnership; we’re trying to correct this problem, because a lot of us CMCs are approaching the same organizations.” Establishing a network or coalition in order to secure new funds and to execute major programmes on behalf of donors would be worth testing by UNESCO.

#### 4.6.8 Resilience to external factors

In the section on international partnerships, we noted how the negative experience some donors have had with telecentres may affect the ability of other centres to raise funds. This is only one of several external factors beyond the immediate control of a CMC that could affect a CMC's prospects for sustainability. The evaluation team has identified four such factors against which CMCs must develop measures of resilience.

##### 1. Social factors within the community will affect operations.

Among those mentioned by informants:

- Security concerns in Jamaica, India and Nepal have on occasion affected the ability of staff and volunteers, especially women, to move freely into surrounding neighbourhoods and villages. This can frustrate efforts to run social mobilization programmes and to collect community input to radio shows. Women from outlying villages are also less likely to come into the CMC regularly for training or to volunteer.
- Low literacy levels and marginal English and French language competency have restricted the size of the user base for Internet services and consequently negatively impacted revenue expectations for centres in Benin and Jamaica.
- Conservativeness of the target community was noted in Bangladesh as a factor limiting community participation in the CMC.
- Caste barriers in Nepal and India can prevent people of lower caste from believing that new technologies and training programmes are accessible to them, and that new employment opportunities beyond their traditional caste employment could open up as a result.

While most CMCs raised these social factors, we observed some inability to do a systematic analysis of how the CMC might surmount such impediments to their work. Only on the issue of caste did we observe formally planned efforts to address the external challenges presented by social exclusion.

##### 2. National government policies and procedures

These can either create a solid enabling environment for the CMC to succeed, or can act as barriers to success and at the very least, slow progress toward goals.

- Policies limiting or preventing the licensing of community radio broadcasting, or restricting the type of content that could be broadcast were noted as significant barriers in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. These limitations impact how the CMCs might expand their audience share, their programming and related opportunities for raising funds or selling additional services. In India and Bangladesh, local community organizations are not eligible for broadcast licenses. In Nepal, a ban on broadcasting news of any kind was still in effect at the time of writing. While CMCs there shifted their emphasis for the duration to narrow coverage of "community events", they all expressed some concern over the dangers that the government might choose to ban all broadcasting other than music.
- In Africa and the Caribbean, concerns were related more to inconsistencies in terms of rules and tariffs. In Burkina Faso, for example, a key factor in the destabilization of the centre was the sudden and unexpected doubling of the telecommunications tariff by the national government. Trinidad, Barbados and

Guyana also all commented on the challenges of dealing with unexpected changes in national telecom policies and fees.

- Sri Lanka, Uganda and Benin all observed the challenge of dealing with inconsistent support from national government agencies. A change in the Sri Lanka government led to a policy change, that the government would no longer support the cost of internet connectivity in community centres. At the same time, the government did not want to cede ownership of the CMCs to the community members, who were willing to find alternative means to finance connectivity. In Uganda, turnover of civil servants responsible for CMC projects has created constant problems. In Benin,

Les autorités administratives régionales et nationaux entretiennent avec le CMC une relation assez distant. Au départ tous ont exprimé leur enthousiasme et promis d'aider le CMC. Jusque là ils ne se sont pas manifestés. Par exemple pour obtenir une ligne téléphonique et accéder à l'offre ADSL le CMC a frappé a toutes les port administratives san résultat.

- In Tanzania, changes towards a more open and democratic political process have led to more flexible and open policies on broadcast licensing and Internet access. As one informant noted, the government understands the concept that "poor information equals poor decisions". The government has established a special fund to support rural communications, buffering communities from rate increases like those that shut down the Burkina Faso CMC.

### 3. Competition in the broadcasting and telecentre marketplace

- Mozambique, Burkina Faso, and one CMC in Nepal expressed concern about competition with commercial Internet cafes, computer training and other business services. In Nepal in particular, the CMC has been challenged to defend a charge that its training services are subsidized through donors and the use of volunteers, allowing it to uncut the competition. Most CMCs recognize that once Internet access is introduced into a community and a market established, the commercial vendors won't be far behind. At the same time, they appear somewhat ill prepared to deal with the resulting competition and impact on their own revenue streams.
- In many centres, but particularly in Nepal and Uganda, concern was expressed over loss of audience share to a growing number of commercial FM stations with stronger signals and a possible future loss of audience to TV. CMCs should be planning in advance for competition, diversifying and expanding their content production.

As noted by an informant in the peer group, "having very basic standards of inclusion, content, connectivity is ok, but it's not ok for very long if you want to keep people involved and address competition from other types of services. It's not enough to just keep things going, [the CMCs] will have to keep improving and competing and doing a lot of evaluation to see if they're meeting community needs."

### 4. Increasing access to cable TV

- Tansen Nepal CMC has a cable TV channel rather than radio, and is about to provide this channel through a second local cable network. Budikote transmits a radio program through a cable TV channel. Bangladesh considered going with cable rather than radio but abandoned the concept because of the incremental costs; however they do distribute videos to local cable operators. We suspect that this early use of cable TV is only the beginning, and that CMCs should begin to

consider whether they might also be serving their communities by building relationships with local cable TV providers, and beginning to develop video content for delivery on the cable stations to complement their radio offerings. This will be particularly important for those CMCs either located in or planned for periurban areas where access to cable TV is increasing.

In only a few cases were CMCs observed to be able to systematically identify and plan for the impact of external factors on their operations. There is a need to build capacity within the CMCs to identify such external challenges in order to address or mitigate their impact. Even an introduction to simple SWOT analysis techniques will be helpful to centres as they start to plan for sustainability beyond their start-up phase. In general, we would encourage UNESCO to promote a three year strategic planning cycle for CMCs

UNESCO itself has an important role to play in helping CMCs to identify and respond to external factors:

- Identifying trends in communications technology and media developments at the national and multinational levels, to keep CMCs informed and aware of the “bigger picture” and how it might affect them.
- Influencing national governments towards a more positive policy environment that will allow CMCs to thrive.

## **5. Lessons Learned for UNESCO Programme Management, Coordination and Partnerships**

### **5.1 General Observations**

This section explores the influence the CMC initiative has had on UNESCO programming. In general, the programme logic anticipated that the CMC initiative would demonstrate the advantage of creating a hybrid from an existing facility compared to standalone radio or telecentres; that the initiative would achieve intersectoral cooperation and HQ/field office cooperation; and that a coalition of stakeholders involved in ICT4D and community radio would emerge. Most important, the evaluation was to assess the viability of scale up of pilot projects to national levels. In brief, UNESCO has demonstrated beyond doubt the advantage of blending the two technology groups (radio and ICTs). There is now an established community of development organizations and practitioners working with both technologies at the community level as a result of UNESCO’s interventions. We are less satisfied in UNESCO’s performance against indicators of internal cooperation on the CMC initiative. Nevertheless, we believe that there is enough information now available from the initial phase to manage an effective scale-up of the initiative. We caution, however, that the scale up may not be replicating the experience of the pilot phase. The pilot phase introduced a new technology to an existing facility. In scale up, it is anticipated that both radio and ICT/telecentre components will be added to an established community organization. We cannot assess from the CMC pilot phase evaluation whether a “turnkey” CMC can be successfully installed and sustained where no such facilities previously existed.

### **5.2 Demonstrated value of hybrid and important success factors**

In the Uganda telecentre evaluation, the criticism was made that the standalone telecentres were in fact educating the urban elite class but the rural communities were

not benefiting; and that management style was top down and government centric<sup>11</sup>. UNESCO is naturally concerned that the CMC initiative does not replicate this experience. The Uganda CMCs now report two important changes resulting from the UNESCO intervention:

- radio is reaching rural and, marginalized groups with information that radio producers access from the Internet
- the UNESCO intervention brought on board local leadership and the CMCs themselves are now working on full community ownership of the centres.

The radio component of a CMC generates the excitement and passion for building a sustainable community and for strengthening social and cultural ties within the community. The telecentre components have added digital tools to improve radio production; enriched content and news from outside of the community through access to the Internet; and diversified staffing, audiences and revenues. Young people gather at the centres to learn new skills, to explore new worlds together, and to gain the confidence that they too are as connected and capable as young people in urban centres. Telecentre services (including in some cases simple phone services) have helped local people to maintain ties with relatives who have left their villages for other economic or educational opportunities.

Local district administrators are using the CMC to increase public awareness and participation in local decision making. Development workers are finding new funding resources through the Internet. Teachers are more empowered by being able to source more information to develop better curriculum materials.

UNESCO now has a solid basis of evidence to support the hybrid approach, in particular on factors contributing to their success:

1. Building on an existing facility: One of the factors for the success of the CMCs is that UNESCO has in fact leveraged a pre-existing investment, building on the infrastructure and community relations that are already established, even if those facilities may have been somewhat unstable or unsustainable at the time. Expansion of audience and activities has significantly strengthened the existing operations.
2. Ownership and long term commitment: The most successful of the pilot CMCs appear to either have full community ownership by becoming a local cooperative or owned by the village district administration; or they are hosted by an established NGO/CBO with a development agenda.
3. Good integration of radio and telecentre components, including oversight of both functions by a single manager or board member.
4. Orientation to development: Staff and volunteers oriented to a multifaceted development agenda, not just to ICT entrepreneurship or acting as a more traditional media outlet focused on news and cultural affairs. Development programmes – on health, education, agriculture, etc – are actively encouraged. Programming activities are directly linked into social mobilization efforts through listeners clubs and self help groups.
5. Diversification of content: the centres are developing content relevant to a wide range of needs and interests to their audiences/users; the content ranges from health to education to local culture to small business management – something for everyone. Effective use of listeners clubs has been instrumental in ensuring that the centres are responsive to community interests.

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<sup>11</sup> CMC informants in Uganda also made this observation about the original telecentre initiative.

6. Access to tools and expertise: While not all tools developed by UNESCO are used by all CMCs all the time, they are effective in filling gaps in operating knowledge – those occasions when CMCs need answers to address a management problem or a gap in training materials or a tool to download content for offline use when Internet connections become unstable.
7. Diversification of revenue, including capacity to approach the international donor community: Managers have skills to diversify revenues, through innovation in business planning combined with connections into a variety of development assistance agencies that will either hire the services of the CMC to help with local programmes, or will provide technical support through international volunteers, pre-packaged programs for radio broadcast and funds for new projects and equipment.

### **5.3 Within UNESCO: intersectoral cooperation, HQ/Field Cooperation**

In all other elements of the evaluation matrix, we have determined either significant progress or real success for UNESCO. We are less satisfied in UNESCO's performance against indicators of internal cooperation on the CMC initiative:

- Demonstrated, effective and mutually reinforcing interaction between Headquarters and field offices, and
- Demonstrated, effective and mutually reinforcing interaction between CI and other sectors

The potential of value added to UNESCO CMCs through intersectoral cooperation has not been realized, either in terms of sharing management lessons among UNESCO's various models of community centres, or in terms of ensuring that UNESCO programming from other sectors can and is being delivered through CMCs. With respect to relations with field offices, CMCs in the pilot phase indicated a stronger relationship with UNESCO headquarters rather than the relevant field office, with the exception of those CMCs in South Asia, who had a good working relationship with the South Asia office. Field office support for scale up was not investigated as scale up activities lay outside the terms of the evaluation for the pilot CMCs.

There is one outstanding exception to this observation, and we would note that the strong performance of CMCs in South Asia is in part due to the commitment that the India office has made to CMCs in the region. Having dedicated staff and contractors based in the region have helped UNESCO to focus on adding real value to the CMC initiative, through the development of the eNRICH software and the testing of Ethnographic Action Research. Having a channel for problem solving within the region has been important to the CMCs. This regionally based support has also led to new initiatives to begin cross fertilization of ideas between Community Learning Centres and Community Multimedia Centres.

In general, CMCs commented very favourably on their relationship with UNESCO, but we observed that the relationship was predominantly with the Paris office rather than with local field offices. From Mali:

It is sometimes difficult to work together with local UNESCO branches; often they don't seem so interested, it's easier to work with [programme management at HQ] than with the offices in Mali.

CMCs in the Africa region believe that systems for locally based follow-up and support are essential. In reviewing two notable failures of CMCs – one in Mali and one in Burkina Faso, the evaluator noted that contributing factors to those failures might have been detected sooner and failure avoided had there been better mechanisms in place in the field for monitoring CMC performance. Obviously this issue becomes even more critical for scale-up of the initiative. There must be real ownership and support on the ground with the UNESCO field offices for CMCs to prosper on a more extensive scale.

Crisis management, while necessary, is certainly not the only role for UNESCO at the field level. CMCs also believe that at the national / regional level, UNESCO has a key role in stimulating interaction among the CMCs, fostering internal communications, ensuring that lessons are shared by all centres, and initiating mutual problem solving and innovation. The pilot phase indicates that this will not happen spontaneously; networking skills need to be learned and practised, and UNESCO should be out there on the ground working with CMCs to develop these skills, much as it is currently developing ethnographic action research skills in a very hands on way.

Promoting CMCs as a platform for other development agencies is another area where field offices should be playing a much stronger role. The Kathmandu office noted how they have promoted the Community Learning Centres to local offices of UNICEF and USAID; and they would be open to doing this also for CMCs. But this of course begs the larger question: which type of centre should be promoted, when and for what purpose?

The evaluation team was struck by the number of different models of centres have been promoted by the CI sector and other sectors of UNESCO: telecentres established under the ICT for Poverty Reduction initiative; other telecentres and CMCs funded through the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC); cultural centres; community learning centres. And there may well be others. In the tourist centre of Lumbini, we learned that there was a Community Learning Centre in one location, and a CMC in a totally different location. Undoubtedly there are other examples of this type of parallel action.

The evaluation team did not have the opportunity to explore in depth what the differences between these models might be; but we were able to discern what they have in common:

- Converging interests in how to deploy old and newer technologies (how to function in areas off the power grids; how to use technology to empower the visually and hearing impaired; how to capture local cultures on audio and video and share back to the communities; and so forth).
- Challenges in operations (ensuring community ownership; training staff; providing tools, supporting networking, building a culture for volunteerism; clarifying legal status so that centres can directly receive funding from other donors; helping centres to influence policies in departments of education, telecommunication, and local development, long term sustainability).
- Complementary activities to promote social inclusion and social mobilization (giving voice to local people, providing opportunities to learn (often just for the sake of learning), mobilizing self-help groups).
- Common commitment to improving the quality of life of the poor and marginalized.

A senior informant from the sector frankly acknowledged that there is internal competition among these models in UNESCO<sup>12</sup>, deriving in part from different sources of support (the Swiss for CMCs, the Japanese for CLCs, and so forth). But the informant also noted that “all the models still need to serve the purposes of UNESCO”.

The evaluation team believes it is time for UNESCO to undertake a thorough cross sectoral review of all these initiatives with a view to much stronger and mutually reinforcing collaboration, if not outright integration into a single management unit. UNESCO already has some internal experience with managing cross sectoral concerns: establishing an internal office to review all Africa based initiatives; creating internal functions for the oversight of the inclusion of youth and women across all initiatives.

**We would strongly encourage UNESCO to consider how these important community gathering points – these centres for learning, information, culture and communications – can best serve UNESCO’s mandate in a more coherent and collaborative manner.**

#### ***5.4 Building a coalition of stakeholders involved in ICT4D and community radio***

The community of stakeholders exploring the linkages between the technologies appears to be growing. A key informant noted UNESCO’s efforts in Africa and South Asia, but also observed that in South America, independent of UNESCO’s interventions, there are now many radio stations that have latched onto the mixed media train. UNESCO recognized the need for multimedia training resources that would support not only UNESCO’s initiative, but others who are now working in a combined telecentre/radio environment. Rather than develop these in-house, UNESCO supported a coalition of organizations working in this field (One World, APC, etc.) to develop the training materials that could be used by all stakeholders.

We noted in Section 2 above that the CMC initiative itself has secured strong international recognition. Participation in key fora such as the Global Knowledge Partnership and the World Summit on the Information Society have led to a return on investment in terms of significant profile and positioning for UNESCO as a strong, effective and valued actor in the field of communications and information technology for development. Support for the hybrid model exists among partners and peers. AMARC has adopted some of the lessons from UNESCO’s experiments and is exploring how to strengthen digital production capacity and access to the Internet among its member radio stations.

#### ***5.5 Viable Scale up to national levels***

“Scale-up” – the exponential increase of CMCs in a country from one or two pilots to fifty or more, is to be implemented in Mali, Mozambique and Senegal. UNESCO has proposed this scale up on the grounds that scaling up will provide a critical mass of centres that can influence ICT policy issues with the government and build national partnerships across government departments, field offices of UN agencies, and the private sector.

In this “rapid results” phase of CMC development, it was recognized that one or two CMCs in each country might have local impact but would not necessarily benefit the

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<sup>12</sup> In the course of the final review of the report, the Sector contested the above statement as a misinterpretation of what was said.

whole country. But we were excited to see that in some cases the pilots have already been influential at the national policy level. In Mozambique, it was observed that lessons learned from the two Centres have fed into the process of national ICT policy and strategy implementation, in which telecentres are an integral component. Some of the centres in Tanzania and Sri Lanka have had similar levels of influence, no doubt due to the fact that those centres are currently owned by national government departments who have a stake in their success.

However, although the individual pilots have demonstrated success for this initial “rapid results” phase, some informants have expressed concern about the scale up phase, believing that the model cannot be applied uniformly to every situation and to every country. Conservative views on Mali alone have suggested that only 15 CMCs may be viable, not the 50 to 60 that have been proposed.

According to the initiative design and implementation, the CMC initiative did not set out to test whether a “full service” centre with both telecentre and radio components could be installed where no facility previously existed. The challenge during the initial phase was to determine whether the addition of either radio or telecentre services would increase impact and sustainability of an established local media centre, not what it would take to set up a CMC from scratch. We know from the evaluation that the addition of a new technology to an existing facility benefits the facility greatly; we do not know whether a “turnkey” CMC can be successfully installed and sustained where no facilities previously existed.

UNESCO informants themselves described the initial phase as technology “staging” rather than technology “dropping”: providing some equipment that complements an existing setup; when and if a centre decides to move into training, only then providing an overhead projector, or if they move into commercial music or video production, only then providing more professional quality equipment, or if they are successful at getting audience share, only then upgrading the power of the transmitter, and so forth. However, in the plans for scale up, and in particular through individual grants occasionally provided by IPDC for a CMC startup, we are beginning to see a shift towards “dropping in” a full CMC setup, as if a CMC can simply be “bought” and “installed”.

We are concerned about this. There may be an underlying assumption with this turnkey concept that CMCs can become financially sustainable as soon as they are set up. This is not the case; and the danger is, as noted earlier, that CMCs will have to focus attention on that segment of the population with purchasing power in order to generate revenues rather than developing the scope of activities to target the poor and marginalized.

We understand that in the plans for scale-up, in those situations where no community media facility currently exists, the CMC is being set up with a well established local institution that has strong and long standing roots in the community. This is a critically important success factor, and should ensure that the work program of the CMC will be entrepreneurial in terms of revenue streams but also oriented to social development; and it will provide the new CMC with a stable management structure. However, both UNESCO and the CMC host organization will need to be aware of the significant technical and programmatic challenge facing an organization taking on a range of technologies all at once. Without any experience developing local content for radio or for digital audio or video productions, without any prior experience in offering any type of media training (radio or computer), without any experience managing the sale of services, and without clearer understanding of the role of volunteers and the management of the volunteer cycle in operating a CMC, the host organization will have a real learning curve ahead of it; and it will take more time to achieve the outcomes that were achieved by other CMCs in the rapid results phase. UNESCO will need to invest at the field level in good CMC training, in fostering interaction among CMCs for mutual support, in helping the CMCs to

trouble shoot. And UNESCO will have to stay the course for several years. This must be undertaken with the full involvement of field offices in the scale up countries.

For those individual cases where an organization receives funding from IPDC to set up a CMC, IPDC must make every effort to connect that organization with the overall CMC initiative, to ensure that they get adequate advice and support, and become connected into the growing community of experienced CMC managers. We would even go so far as to suggest that before an organization is considered for funding, they should go through a CMC "orientation" so that they are fully informed in advance of what they need to consider in operating a CMC. They need to weigh the risks as well as the benefits. Otherwise, we predict that there will be a significantly higher degree of failure with these individual grants than was experienced during the CMC "rapid results" phase. This will not be due to a flaw in the hybrid model itself, but rather to UNESCO misjudging the level of capacity of the proponent organization, and the need to foster that capacity through the provision of tools, training and networking with other CMCs in the region.

With these cautionary observations in mind, the evaluation team believes that there is enough information now available from the initial phase to manage an effective scale-up of the initiative, so long as the success factors we have identified are built into the startup for each centre, and so long as some of the challenges we have identified are adequately anticipated and managed, with good field support from UNESCO.

Guidance on the future of CMCs, including managing the scale-up phase, is addressed in Section C.

## **6 Longer term outcomes, development results**

### **6.1 General Observations**

The programme logic anticipated that the CMC initiative might contribute to the reduction of the digital divide in marginalized populations; would support social inclusion in community development and that sustainable grassroots community development and quality of life would be enhanced through access to a broader range of information and through improved knowledge sharing.

It is of course still early to assess longer term development results; and may not really be possible until UNESCO has scaled up the initiative. Certainly within many of the individual communities where the pilot projects are located, the digital dividend is being collected by thousands of villagers. As suggested above, a more formal monitoring system should be established for the scale up effort, in order to aggregate observations from individual centres and thus assess benefits to a country as a whole.

The evaluation team has seen a number of positive signals that longer term benefits and impacts are in fact realized quite early within an individual community, indicating progress towards more sustainable grassroots development and enhancement of quality of life. In our view, as stated in Section A, across all regions, the CMC pilots are demonstrating an important role in community development and community resilience: strengthening cultural roots and values; breaking through social isolation for marginalized groups; supporting education, health, skills development and other important social and economic development efforts.

## **6.2 Poverty alleviation and potential links to PRSPs**

In the programme logic itself, there is no explicit requirement to demonstrate that CMCs will contribute directly to improving economic conditions in their communities, although it is implicit in the concept of “sustainable community development”. However, many informants, both in UNESCO and at CMCs, expressed an interest in understanding what the potential linkages to poverty reduction might be. Some of this interest stems from involvement in earlier telecentre programmes, such as the ICT for Poverty Reduction initiative. And as countries move towards implementation of their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which provide the policy framework for development assistance financing, CMCs are naturally interested in being able to make a case for national support in the context of PRSPs. CMC managers would like to know whether the PRSP process can lead to national infusion of support to CMCs.

The evaluation team observed three areas where we think there are some powerful indications that the CMCs do contribute to poverty alleviation.

### **6.2.1 Reconfirming that poverty is not just a lack of income and that poverty alleviation can be stimulated through access to knowledge.**

As noted in the India case study, “the research being done in Budikote indicates that their definition of poverty is quite different; sometimes it is the lack of access to drinking water, at other times it is health issues. The issue of poverty is complex: it involves issues of rights, including being heard, denial of basic services like access to water, perceived opportunities and locally defined and specific empowerment. It is in these areas Namma Dhwani has been a catalyst, by identifying the gaps and by producing and broadcasting locally relevant content”.

One of the Tanzanian informants at COSTECH suggested that the old hierarchy of human needs defined by Maslow should be reversed, and that we begin to recognize that the first human need is for knowledge: understanding how to grow food more effectively, how to prevent illness, and so forth. Radio and other communications technologies provide access to knowledge and as a necessary infrastructure they are, in his view, more important than roads.

### **6.2.2 Fostering microcredit/self help groups**

CMCs, rural telecentres and other similar facilities are beginning to be viewed by the development community as “microoperators”<sup>13</sup>: agents working directly at the grassroots on a small scale to initiate new development opportunities. Our evidence from the site visits confirms that CMCs have created or enriched self help groups, directly connecting CMC support with the generation of income from small savings and credit operations.

The CMC manager is often seen as a development worker, and the CMC as a platform for development, encouraging the people in their surrounding communities to take initiative in changing their circumstances based on the stories and information provided through the CMC.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with InfoDev

### 6.2.3 Creating new livelihood opportunities and the link to social change

While there is only anecdotal evidence at present, most CMCs interviewed had a story about training volunteers who then went on to other employment, using the new skills acquired from the CMC. But no CMC is systematically tracking what happens to people who take their courses, so it is difficult at present to see how much of a contribution CMCs are making in this area. The trainers themselves were frank in their observations that the computer training by itself was rarely sufficient for many of their students. Most of them need other education as well: English language proficiency or literacy skills or a School Leaving Certificate. Only Nepal commented specifically on how the new livelihoods are also breaking down caste and gender barriers, in a culture where professions and jobs are still strongly tied to caste, and opportunities for women are still limited. Those with new skills like digital production, videography and computer use gain new respect. Women gain stature within their families; lower caste have new access to business, political and cultural affairs that would have been denied them in the past.

### 6.3 Cultural resilience and adaptiveness

The role of culture, and the fostering and sustaining of cultural roots and values, is too often overlooked in projects promoting sustainable communities and quality of life. Cultural resilience and adaptiveness – the capacity of a community to retain critical knowledge and at the same time adapt to external influences and pressures – may well be as an important to sustainable development as ecological resilience. The writers of this report would like to draw UNESCO's attention to some recent work in Canada in which culture is being advanced as a fourth "pillar" of sustainable development.

The notion of cultural sustainability is not yet well defined or well understood at the community level. One approach is to view cultural sustainability as an integrated planning and decision-making process that looks toward a long-term view of a cultural system's development. A cultural sustainability policy approach would begin by determining the indicators of healthy cultural systems in Canada, and would take into account the connections among cultural, social, economic and environmental objectives and their long-term outcomes. By contrast, past approaches to cultural policy have tended to focus on supporting the elements of the cultural production cycle: creation, production and dissemination. This perspective could be broadened to examine the role of culture in the long-term development, vibrancy and cohesion of communities<sup>14</sup>.

It is outside the scope of this evaluation to explore in depth whether Richard Florida's thoughts on the role of "cultural creatives"<sup>15</sup> in western urban centres also applies at the village level. But we do think there are some interesting parallels worthy of exploration by UNESCO, in particular Florida's "global creativity index," based on measures of technology, talent, and tolerance. In CMCs interviews, a sense of joy and pride came into the discussions when they talked about their own local musicians or storytellers who now, through technology, have a broader audience.

The CMC model may be an important tool to support cultural resilience in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. We would suggest that radio is inspiring and reinforcing local expression while new information, regional and global views from the Internet is

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/ndcc/conf/documents/icsp-discussion\\_e.shtml#s1](http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/ndcc/conf/documents/icsp-discussion_e.shtml#s1)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.creativeclass.org/>

enriching the local cultural environment. Undoubtedly more work needs to be done to determine what the indicators are of healthy cultural systems, and the CMCs should be assessed in light of those. Certainly CMC managers have recognized the influence that they can bring to strengthening traditional arts and new local talent. In India, the CMC has built up an extensive archive of previously unrecorded traditional drama and music from the region and in doing so, has contributed immeasurably to preserving the local heritage. In Ghana, the CMC set a target before even beginning operation that 70% of the broadcast would be in local languages, and 30% in English and other languages. In India, the evaluator notes that “by broadcasting in the local language (Kannada), information and knowledge are now accessible to women and children, who feel empowered as a result. This increased sense of confidence is evident in the improved and active participation in community affairs and in interactions with outsiders. Young boys boast of being as computer literate as those in Bangalore”. In Benin, Tanzania, Nepal and other countries, local musicians have finally been able to record their music through the CMC facilities and now get not only local airplay but are making their mark nationally.

UNESCO should consider in future what role CMCs can play not only shaping and implementing national ICT policy, but national cultural policy. Internally, UNESCO should look carefully at the implications of the CMCs playing such a strong role in culture as it considers a more integrative approach to managing its wide range of community centres.

## **C. Recommendations: On the Future of CMCs and the CMC initiative within UNESCO**

Drawing from the findings of the assessment, the team was asked to consider several key questions:

- External drivers: What are the trends in ICTs for development that might influence future deployment of the CMC model
- Internal considerations:
  - Within the current scale up, what should UNESCO pay immediate attention to;
  - Whether and how to promote the model to other UNESCO sectors and other international agencies;
  - Future directions for management of the initiative within UNESCO
- Monitoring and evaluation processes for the future.

### **1. External drivers: trends in ICTs for development**

#### ***1.1 Integration of ICTs into the development process***

When informants were asked what trends in ICT4D might influence CMC development, they tended to emphasize processes rather than new technologies. Many were revisiting concepts of “development communications” and “communications ecologies” – looking at whole systems of interaction rather than further refinements on access to information that tended to be the focus of early ICT4D experiments.

One informant observed that there has been a substantial shift in the last year or two. In their view, the early actors in ICT4D were networking or information content people rather than development specialists. Many entered the development field with unrealistic expectations that development would be accelerated if one could just get local knowledge or indigenous knowledge into an electronically sharable format. To be fair, those who sought advice and support from the development community often met with resistance. Development practitioners were often skeptical about the introduction of ICTs. The writer of this report is reminded of an incident at the Beijing Women’s Conference in 1995, when a development practitioner stood up at a side event and shook a tambourine saying that this was all the technology she needed for communications.

The trend now is the integration of ICT into development. Telecommunications infrastructure and ICT tools are viewed as being as important to community sustainable development as energy supply or transportation, for the new opportunities that they provide for poverty alleviation; for improving the management of local ecosystems, for strengthening health, education and other services for the well being of people, and for cultural resilience. Agencies like InfoDev now want to better understand the role of ICT micro-operators like CMCs in the development process.

ICT practitioners are also putting the “C” back into ICT: more emphasis is being placed these days on strengthening communication, beyond improving access to information. In

general, there is a resurgence of international interest in understanding the value of communications in development work. Secretariats and mechanisms of multilateral environmental agreements are more actively considering how to operationalize articles in the conventions that relate to public education, training and awareness; coalitions like the Communications Initiative and the COMPLUS Alliance<sup>16</sup> are gaining international profile and taking on new international projects. UNEP is looking for new communications channels for the delivery of grassroots environmental programming. With this global increase in communications work, CMCs are very well positioned to provide platforms for agencies seeking to strengthen their communications from international and national levels into the grassroots.

Finally, ICTs are starting to fulfill their potential for strengthening governance (“e-governance”), and the provision of government services electronically (“e-government”). ICTs are leveling the playing field between citizens and governments, by providing access to the same information that governments have, and by providing a much broader range of communications channels for stakeholders to interact with each other, opening up opportunities for the expression of criticism and debate. Just within the narrower sphere of “e-government”, CMCs have the potential to act as access points to national or state level services, and should be championed in this context as governments invest more intensively in electronic mechanisms to streamline and improve the efficiencies of their public administrations. But governments should not overlook the opportunity to use CMCs to encourage the participation of the poor and marginalized in public debate and decision making.

## **1.2 New technology opportunities**

A few technology sophistications were mentioned by informants, although these tended to be interesting combinations of existing technologies rather than entirely new developments. For example, there are experiments underway in Mali to improve rural telephone services by connecting wireless wifi to cellular phones. A telecentre would provide the wireless access; villagers would use cheap cellular phones to connect to each other and access local message services on the computer in the telecentre; people from abroad could phone into the telecentre to leave messages to be accessed by local recipients; who could in turn leave messages for people abroad. Informants anticipate that more can be done with cell phones (SMS for sharing time sensitive information like market prices; and in future email, document downloading, and so forth); but with cell networks still covering only 10-15% of the poorer countries like Mali, and with costs for technologies like Blackberry still well beyond the reach of the rural and periurban poor, it is unlikely that these will impact CMC development during the scale-up period. It is more likely that CMCs will make good use of other personal electronic devices and software for offline use of information and for the recording and sharing of music and cultural events:

- The loan of personal digital assistants (PDAs) and portable digital audio players for downloading information and training materials for health and agriculture extension workers
- The use of eNRICH for the organization of Internet information to be used offline in centres with slow, unreliable or expensive Internet connections
- The use of digital cameras, audio and video recorders for local arts and information production, and the distribution of products on CD/DVD/and other formats.

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<sup>16</sup> [www.comminit.com](http://www.comminit.com); [www.complusalliance.org](http://www.complusalliance.org)

## 2. Internal considerations for UNESCO

### 2.1 UNESCO's role in the CMC initiative

#### 2.1.1 Should UNESCO be involved in scale-up?

We believe that there are still some interesting questions to be answered through a scaling up process.

- Can a critical mass of centres significantly accelerate progress towards sustainable development across a country, through the aggregation of their contributions towards social inclusion and mobilization, cultural resilience and improving quality of life?
- Can a critical mass of centres foster partnerships across government departments, to help with the delivery of government services and to improve citizen participation in government?
- Can a critical mass of centres significantly influence national ICT policy in the furtherance of a country's sustainable development, governance and poverty reduction objectives?
- Can a critical mass of centres become the development platforms for more efficient and effective delivery of programming of field offices of UN and other international agencies?

UNESCO has taken some ownership of the concept of CMCs, and should, we believe, continue to be involved in exploring the impact of multiplying the numbers of centres in several countries.

However, as we note in section B, 1.4 of this report, we have observed the lack of clarity on UNESCO's longer term interests in developing and implementing CMCs. UNESCO needs to determine whether it intends to:

- sustain a longer commitment to the initiative, in order to actually use the CMCs it is establishing in support of its mandate, or
- simply transfer lessons to governments and other agencies, in the hopes that others will take up the model.

Either way, UNESCO needs to include in the planning for scale up the methods by which it will either sustain its own interest or ensure that others will benefit and sustain the investment that UNESCO has made.

However, we agree with the observation of one informant who doesn't "believe in generic solutions; what really makes something work is that there's no need to demonstrate "uptake" of a solution someone else has made up."

We recommend that UNESCO HQ look not only at the take-up of CMCs by others, but at how UNESCO will use CMCs for its own strategic interests in understanding the role of ICTs in the development process.

### 2.1.2. Opportunities for UNESCO sectors programming

As one informant suggests, if UNESCO programmes support dance, music, and the arts, they should be supporting platforms like CMCs that deliver these cultural productions and events to local and broader audiences. Sustainability for CMCs may lie in part in better deployment of CMCs by a wide range of programmes and initiatives across UNESCO.

The UNESCO biosphere reserve programme has in fact begun to explore how the CMC might work as a tool to support the reserves. Biosphere reserves are usually located in more remote regions, and are managed by the villages that exist within and around the reserve. Some countries have elaborated a need for a tool or vehicle that will help the villages to communicate among themselves, to ensure that everyone understands and shares the rules on what can and can't be done in the reserve, what livelihoods opportunities might be supported using the resources of the reserve in a sustainable manner, and even simply broadcasting on a regular basis what the boundaries of the reserve are.

A CMC in or near the reserve could serve to broadcast the technical information about the reserve to village stakeholders; villages could send their questions about sustainable uses into the CMC for review by biosphere staff, who would then communicate responses through the radio. Listeners groups could be combined with local self help groups already involved in maintaining and using the reserve. The biosphere staff would have access to equipment and connectivity needed to compile their reports and communicate with the relevant national government departments. And if every biosphere reserve in a region had a CMC, web sites could be set up to allow the sharing of information and practices from one biosphere reserve to another.

If UNESCO is committed to the concept of "take-up" – getting other international agencies to adopt the model, there can be no better advertising than UNESCO demonstrating how it is using CMCs to support its own scientific, educational and cultural programming.

We therefore recommend that UNESCO HQ review how it can use the CMCs to deliver its own programming.

### 2.1.3. Opportunities for other agencies

We suggest in section B, 4.6.4 on diversification of financial support, that CMCs lack capacity in understanding how to secure funding from the international development assistance community for their various social services and programmes. UNESCO can play a very important role in promoting CMCs as platforms for development to other international agencies. In doing so, UNESCO will help CMCs diversify their donor base through the provision of services to other donors.

Insiders at UNESCO have commented that UNESCO is not always so visible on the international stage compared to other UN agencies. But UNESCO could well position itself to partner with other agencies like FAO, UNEP, and WHO to help them communicate with and engage their own stakeholders at the grassroots through working with CMCs. We reiterate that it is now time for UNESCO to raise its sights, and consider not only how to build a coalition of support for the model, and a transfer of lessons to other ICT4D projects.

We suggest that UNESCO HQ build a coalition of agencies who will make active use of centres that are in place and under development.

## **2.2 Considerations for scaling up**

### **2.2.1 An enabling policy environment**

CMCs need an enabling policy environment in order to fulfill their own programming objectives and cover their basic operating costs. Too often we heard stories of changes in national policies on connectivity that had a downstream effect of destabilizing a CMC. Or there were barriers due to licensing restrictions or restrictions on press freedoms that prevented CMCs from being able to broadcast.

Many CMCs want UNESCO to become more involved as champions on key policy issues at the national level:

- stable and possibly subsidized charges for rural connectivity
- provision of reliable, affordable energy supply
- open up licensing for community radio stations
- ensure freedom of the press
- advance e-government, so that CMCs can in turn provide access to government services to their communities.
- commit to the use of CMCs as a matter of policy for the delivery of agriculture, health and education extension services

We would add to this the insight from Tanzania, that development issues should be integrated into the curriculum of technology courses at national universities, to ensure that those learning computer and other technologies are exposed to the opportunities and rewards of working in more remote locations.

We recommend that UNESCO HQ accelerate efforts with its member states to create an enabling policy environment for ICT4D.

### **2.2.2 Twelve considerations to ensure sustainability beyond scale-up**

Based on the findings of the evaluation, we suggest that the following be addressed during scale-up.

The first five considerations should be addressed by the UNESCO CI sector.

1. Rigorous adherence to the requirement for community roots, ownership and involvement. CMC as entities that link closely with other institutions and programs that are meeting community needs are more likely to last. For these centres to work, they have to be built on existing community institutions and relationships. We would suggest that UNESCO explore attaching more CMC facilities to other public institutions, such as village or district councils, schools or other training facilities, opening those facilities up to broader public access.
2. In reviewing training and networking needs for CMCs, the CI Sector should keep in mind that opportunities for training, staff exchanges and networking should be provided for staff of CMCs who have similar responsibilities (radio production, training, social mobilization), not just for managers. Wherever possible, the

technology itself should be used, for e-conferences on specific topics, for general sharing of news, lessons and requests for support, for sharing resources on central websites. Building a culture of networking will help to support CMCs into the future.

3. Tools should be made available in several languages. However, we suggest that distance education methods should also be introduced. While the current CMC Guide, multimedia training kit and EAR materials are well developed, many potential CMC staff and volunteers will not learn by working through a manual or CD on their own. Two broad approaches should be considered:
  - a. Facilitated learning: The virtual classroom, with a limited number of learners working through the course at the same time, with an instructor; interaction through e-mail and text with each other and the instructor, involving a specified number of hours on-line plus reading and research.
  - b. Self directed learning: This option is focused on the materials and is self-paced, possibly with the learner interacting with an instructor.
4. Guidelines should be developed on appropriate uses of volunteers, with sensitivity to expectations for recognition and compensation, potential family conflicts particularly with young volunteers, ensuring budget lines for incentives, and managing the cycle of new and departing volunteers.
5. A strong role for the CMCs in development programming, including the preparation of appropriate local content and training materials, and social mobilization through microcredit/self help groups needs to be promoted by the CI Sector. Opportunities for environmental programming should also be promoted.

The following four considerations should be directed to CMCs.

6. Good integration of the telecentre and radio functions must be monitored. Preferably, there should be one manager overall for the CMC, rather than a station manager, and a separate manager for the telecentre service. If there are two separate managers, there must a mechanism to ensure they add value to each other's work. Also, there needs to be a single voice speaking for the CMC at national or regional CMC meetings or electronic discussions.
7. The CMC manager should be both entrepreneurial and development oriented. Reliance on the manager for all aspects of CMC planning and operations needs to be monitored, with guidance provided by the CI Sector on building up a "middle management" level if at all feasible.
8. Access to technical support will need to be monitored. Where CMCs are finding that technicians are unwilling to travel to remote regions, then solutions with equipment vendors may need to be negotiated.
9. Each CMC should prepare a full cost assessment of CMC operating requirements (capital costs and amortization, power and connectivity expenses, staffing, programming, marketing, networking and so forth). Once the full cost assessment has been prepared, a hybrid plan for financial sustainability should be developed. The following are only suggestions on what a hybrid plan might include: there will obviously be local variations on this, depending on the type of structure and governance of the CMC.
  - Operating costs for equipment maintenance, power and connectivity to be recoverable through fees for various services.

- New equipment acquisitions covered through charitable donations or other mechanisms for community support, including capital campaigns and establishing the CMC as a cooperative, with shareholder investments handled in a capital account.
- Staffing to be subsidized through the organization hosting the CMC.
- Support for programming, include staff, transportation and production costs secured through partnerships with district and national government departments, and UN agencies, for the delivery of their programs and services.
- Individual grants for special projects negotiated through donor and foundation channels.

Capacity building for these different revenue generating approaches will need to be provided during scale-up.

The final two considerations should be acted upon together by CMCs and UNESCO CI.

10. Costs for startup of each CMC should be monitored closely, and a full cost account just for startup expenses should be prepared. UNESCO should also develop a full cost financial report on its own internal costs for startup. Based on this, a reassessment should be made of current views that CMCs can be established by adding a \$5,000 suitcase radio to an existing telecentre; or that €20,000 is required for equipment, or that €40,000 to €50,000, including some working capital, is required to ensure success and sustainability.
11. Explore how to build resilience into the CMC model. CMCs need to be able to systematically identify and plan for the impact of external factors on their operations. There is a need to build capacity within the CMCs to identify such external challenges in order to address or mitigate their impact.

### **2.2.3 How to manage scale up**

We would like to suggest that the scale up should not be continued with a “rapid results” approach. That approach has brought forward the necessary information for scale up. However, we recommend that the CI sector should now have a more structured, results based, management plan in place. There should be a country level action plan for each scale-up, detailing goals, objectives, activities, outputs and outcomes, with clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of all actors involved (CMC, national committee, national government, UNESCO, other donors) and timelines in place for monitoring performance.

### **2.2.4 Mobilizing resources for the future**

The Swiss government is currently supporting scale-up in three countries. We recommend that UNESCO HQ should start now to work with national governments to build CMCs into their PRSP implementation processes and five year development plans (much as the UNESCO office in Kathmandu has facilitated the inclusion of Community Learning Centres into Nepal’s next development cycle). Good documentation demonstrating the success of scaling up is needed in order for UNESCO to be able to influence governments to make hard funds available.

## **2.3 Management of the CMC initiative within UNESCO**

We reiterate our recommendation that UNESCO consider how all of the important community gathering points fostered by UNESCO – centres for learning, information, culture and communications – can best serve UNESCO's mandate in a more coherent and collaborative manner.

We recommend that UNESCO HQ should undertake a thorough cross sectoral review of all these initiatives with a view to much stronger and mutually reinforcing collaboration, if not outright integration into a single management unit.

We also recommend that that UNESCO CI maintain an ongoing strong presence for the CMC initiative in headquarters, to ensure coordination and collaboration with these other models; to promote the use of the CMCs by UNESCO itself for the delivery of UNESCO programming during this period; and to build a coalition of UN and other agencies who will make active use of CMCs for their own objectives. Scale up activities must also be synchronized with small grants for new CMCs and support for current CMCs, in order to ensure consistency in training and management of all CMCs being fostered by UNESCO. UNESCO CI should develop the necessary programme logic and implementation plan for this CMC "global" programme.

Scale up will also require a strong presence in the field to manage startups of CMCs where both telecentre and radio components are being installed at the same time, to handle crisis management and to stimulate interaction among the CMCs within countries and regions. UNESCO must take a hands on role in fostering internal communications, ensuring that lessons are shared by all centres, and initiating mutual problem solving and innovation for the scale up to be a success. Just as HQ should work to ensure linkages among sector programming, so too the field offices must link all the CMC activities with regional/subregional activities.

## **3. Future considerations for monitoring and evaluation**

Throughout this report, we have made suggestions related to monitoring and evaluation that should be taken into consideration by the internal oversight group and the Bureau of Strategic Planning at UNESCO. We would like to recap them here.

### **1. Rapid results initiatives**

The CMC success with rapid results should be reviewed by UNESCO for use in other UNESCO programming, and a more deliberate use of the methodology introduced in other large scale, longer term programmes that might benefit. However, traditional evaluation methodologies that are predicated on a sequential flow from programme design to implementation to outcomes do not necessarily work in a rapid results environment. Should UNESCO consider a more deliberate use of rapid results in its programming, the Internal Oversight Service and Bureau of Strategic Planning will need to explore whether there may be more appropriate monitoring and evaluation techniques.

The evaluator recognizes that UNESCO has adopted a Results Based Management approach for all of its programming, but nevertheless notes that some initiatives, especially those in a pilot phase, might be better supported by a Rapid Results approach and that some better measures for Rapid Results initiatives might need to be identified.

Regardless of the approach, more attention needs to be paid to strategic timeframes for initiatives, with benchmarks to assess the value of the initiatives to UNESCO itself against UNESCO's longer term interests.

## 2. Leverage initiatives

While the evaluation team has concluded that the CMCs pilots are serving their communities well, it is difficult to attribute this success entirely to the UNESCO initiative. All CMCs in the pilot program were created through the addition of a technology or service to an existing facility that has had a variety of investments from the community and other donors. The team found no mechanisms for assessing this type of leveraging initiative. We would like to suggest to UNESCO's oversight and evaluation group that more work is needed to develop and deploy tools for assessing these types of interventions that leverage investments from other agencies.

## 3. Full cost and return on investment for UNESCO

While this evaluation did not include a financial audit component, we would observe that it would be difficult in any event to assess UNESCO's return on investment in the CMC program, primarily because of the impossibility in determining UNESCO's full investment. The team noted that UNESCO is weak on its own accounting and reporting systems, in that it is not possible to get a unit cost for UNESCO's own staff time (both across headquarters units (section, sector and financial administration) and field offices) invested in the CMC initiative, let alone break it down by country or individual CMC. For example:

- The investment in the Ethnographic Action Research project does not appear to be aggregated into the total cost of support to South Asia CMCs, even though it is an important contribution to CMCs.
- While it might be possible to calculate the staff costs within the section of CI directly responsible for managing the initiative, there is no mechanism to calculate the additional sector supervision and overhead costs that the initiative would attract, or the HQ (and field) administrative costs involved in negotiating and accounting for the donor contributions.

Given this internal accounting challenge at UNESCO, it is next to impossible to determine what the full costs are in setting up a CMC that include UNESCO's time and the cost of supporting activities. We recommend that UNESCO investigate how to more accurately assess its investment in these initiatives.

## 4. Monitoring system for scale-up

Several peer and CMC informants expressed their view that there is a certain donor fatigue at present with these types of large scale community based technology programmes. We are not entirely convinced this is the case, having ourselves noted the IDRC/Microsoft partnership in establishing a Telecentre support network; in JICA's interest in setting up 100 telecentres in Tanzania; UNDP's Rural Urban partnership program that provides for telecentre development; and in a "digital strategy" for the Pacific Islands under consideration. Nevertheless, others have wound up their support:

There is a certain fatigue, because the results don't come up as quickly as they would like; but I think donors should be more patient, because results will definitely come up; the lesson maybe for the implementers is to do proper M&E and have tangible results for donors in 2-3 years after the start of the programs.

This potential for donor fatigue should be an important driver for UNESCO to ensure that there is a solid, rigorous monitoring system in place for scaling up the CMC initiative. Observations at individual centres must be recorded systematically and aggregated in order to assess benefits of CMCs to a country as a whole. The Ethnographic Action Research methodology or IDRC's outcome mapping methodology may provide a framework for monitoring and evaluation at this scale.

We considered suggesting a number of indicators that might be useful for monitoring the scale up effort. However, we would encourage UNESCO to take a different approach rather than develop the indicators in-house at HQ. IISD has developed a number of principles for the development of indicators for sustainable development; and a leading principle is that the community itself must be involved in indicator selection<sup>17</sup>. If the community chooses the indicators that are most important to it, then the community is more likely to monitor its performance against those indicators. This might be a useful initial "networking" exercise for CMCs involved in scale up.

- Each CMC would discuss with its community stakeholders what indicators of success might be for the CMC
- Either via email or at a country level in-person workshop, CMC managers would share and refine these indicators, retaining those particularly important for their individual circumstances, but also noting for UNESCO what indicators in common could be aggregated to demonstrate CMC contributions across the country.

Such a system, grounded in the experience of individual CMCs, should help mitigate against scale up being driven as a "top down" process.

## 5. Capacity for self assessment

There is a real need to build capacity for self assessment within each CMC. The leader of the evaluation team would suggest that Ethnographic Action Research will be helpful only under circumstances where there is sufficient coordination and financial support from UNESCO and other external advisors through Queensland University of Technology. In its current form, it works at an academically rigorous level, and is providing insights that are valuable for the individual CMCs that are currently using it. Its rigour brings legitimacy and credibility to its findings, which is of course important for the development and donor community. But it is too early to determine whether, once UNESCO's support for EAR is concluded, CMCs will continue to practice it. We are not aware of any CMCs trained in EAR that are continuing to use it without any further support from UNESCO.

A much simpler process for self assessment and planning needs to be developed by the CMCs themselves that takes into consideration available staff and volunteer time. Some key points might be distilled from EAR, based on how it is currently being used. Simple management tools (basic statistics, evaluation forms for training, listener and user surveys) need to be introduced during the startup phase to help CMCs make management decisions quickly and with some confidence.

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<sup>17</sup> Bellagio Principles. IISD. [www.iisd.org/measure/](http://www.iisd.org/measure/)

## Closing notes

The evaluation team would like to thank UNESCO for the opportunity to review such an exciting and transformative initiative. The time and funds and effort that UNESCO has put into the CMC initiative has been matched and usually exceeded by the commitment of CMC staff and the communities where they are based. We look forward to the lessons that will come from the scale-up, and we hope that UNESCO finds the best solution to support CMCs into the future, not only for its own purposes, but for the benefit of the international development community and for the local communities themselves.

In every site visit, we posed the counterfactual question to the telecentre users and radio listeners: if there were no CMC, what would this community be like?

The response was overwhelming: people felt that they would be “backward”; that they would be “behind the times,” “like other districts”; that they would have “no opportunity for learning”.

We end this report with the observation from Manjuanth of the Ambedkar Colony near Budikote:

“It is as if night has become day”.