Request for Expression of Interest

Enhancing the Livelihoods of the Rural Poor
The Role of Information and Communication Technologies
A Knowledge Needs Assessment, Knowledge Map and Framework Paper

Please note that the Deadline for this Request for Expressions of Interest has been extended to Monday, 24 July 2006, 11:30pm DC time.

Country: International

Notice/Contract Number: Grant #1277

Publication Date: June 30, 2006

Deadline: July 24 2006

Funding Agency: infoDev

Implementing Organization: infoDev

Eligibility of Bidders: The consulting team for this assignment is expected to include experienced professionals with the ability to deliver a complex project within a relatively short period of time. The team should include experts with at least 5-8 years experience in fields related to rural development, information and communication needs of the poor, the impact of information and communication technologies on poverty and development, development research and knowledge management, and related areas relevant to the scope of work.

Expression of Interest (EOI):
infoDev invites eligible consultants to indicate their interest in providing expert services as detailed in the attached Terms of Reference for "Enhancing the Livelihoods of the Poor: The Role of Information and Communication Technologies: A Knowledge Needs Assessment, Knowledge Map, and Framework Paper"

The overall objective of this activity is to develop a knowledge needs assessment, knowledge map and framework paper, in both paper and web formats, on the contribution of information and communication technologies to enhancing the livelihoods of the poor, with a primary focus on the rural poor. The work involved in this assignment is scheduled to be completed within approximately 7 months from the date of signing the contract agreement within an available lump-sum budget of $175,000, which includes all fees, travel, and additional related expenses, including an independent audit performed at the conclusion of the assignment.

Interested consultants must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions,
availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc.). Consultants may associate to enhance their qualifications.

Selection will be based on the “Consultants Qualifications” (CQ) method of procurement and Consultants will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers May 2004 (current edition). Electronic submission of the Expression of Interest is preferred. The EOI should be submitted as a single file and as either a Microsoft Word or PDF file.

Interested consultants may obtain further information at the address below between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

Please send your email submission to kmcnamara1@worldbank.org copying msantiago2@worldbank.org by July 24, 2006 before 23.30h Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

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Terms of Reference

Enhancing the Livelihoods of the Rural Poor
The Role of Information and Communication Technologies
A Knowledge Needs Assessment, Knowledge Map and Framework Paper

Main Questions:

How can the full range of information and communication technologies, appropriately adapted, help to improve the livelihoods of poor individuals, families and communities in rural areas and increase their income opportunities, thereby improving their chances of escaping from persistent poverty? What do we know already, both from research and from experience in the field, and what do donor staff and their country counterparts most urgently need to know about these issues? How should we think about the role of ICT in enhancing the livelihoods of the rural poor? What elements most urgently require further research and analysis in order to lay the basis for informed policy and investment by donors, governments and others?

Background:

Reducing the number of individuals and families living in poverty is a fundamental goal of the international development community, as reflected in several of the Targets associated with the Millennium Development Goals ("Reduce Extreme Poverty by Half", "Improve the Lives of Slum Dwellers", etc.) Yet it is a goal that has proved elusive in many countries, most notably in Africa and parts of Asia and Latin America/the Caribbean. There has been a growing recognition in recent years that poverty has multiple, interrelated causes and manifestations beyond the core phenomenon of "income poverty". The poor are especially vulnerable to macroeconomic and environmental shocks and to disease and illness. Their lack of physical and educational assets makes it more difficult for them to create new economic and social opportunities for themselves. Yet they possess rich stores of knowledge, experience and innovative energy which help them survive. This recognition of the complexity both of poverty and of poor people's response to their conditions has led to a growing attention to the livelihoods of the poor, the complex set of strategies and practices they develop to navigate both their poverty and the broader social, economic and environmental conditions that reinforce that poverty. This permits an approach to tackling poverty that focuses not just on increasing the incomes of the poor but on reducing their vulnerabilities, tapping their experience and innovation, and creating the enabling conditions for sustained economic and social empowerment of poor communities.

There is some degree of understandable skepticism about whether information and communication technologies are appropriate tools for addressing the needs and challenges of the poor, particularly the rural poor. Yet even the poorest people and families in rural areas have information and communication needs. More generally, technologies that reduce their expenditure of their few valuable resources (their time, labor, energy, and physical resources) and increase the yield from those expenditures could have a profound positive effect on their livelihoods and incomes. Innovations and tools that leverage their own creativity, and their own knowledge of their context, could benefit both their own situation and those of their neighbors and of other poor people.
elsewhere. Given their poverty and the difficulty of the environments in which they live, it is extremely important to be judicious and practical about the types of technology appropriate to their circumstances and needs. Yet it is equally important to exploit every possible, and practical, use of these technologies for the benefit of the rural poor, both through their direct application to their livelihoods needs and challenges and through their role as an enabler of institutional change, capacity building, governmental effectiveness and accountability, and economic growth more broadly.

A number of donors and other international organizations (DFID, USAID, FAO, IDRC, CTA among others) have done good work on these issues. There is a vast and long experience with using a range of information and communication technologies (including most notably radio) in rural development and agricultural extension projects, with a goal of increasing the incomes and enhancing the livelihoods of the rural poor (e.g. radio for price information and agricultural training, rural internet kiosks and information services). There are many "rural development" projects funded by donors that have information and communication dimensions, but where the use of ICT for these purposes has been of uneven quality and impact.

There are also several Northern and Southern independent organizations that have done good work on innovation by and for the poor, including innovation in using a range of technologies to improve the livelihoods of the poor. Yet information and knowledge about this set of issues is widely dispersed and not easy for donors and other key actors to access in a manageable fashion and, more importantly, to apply in specific contexts. If policy, investments and donor initiatives in this area are to be driven by rigorous knowledge of "what works under what conditions", there is a pressing need to provide donors and policy makers with a clearer "map" of what we know (and what we do not know) about these issues, along with a general framework for thinking about these issues, and concrete evidence from successes and failures in the field.

More importantly, it is vital that this knowledge-provision be directly relevant to the priority needs and working constraints of developing country policy makers, donors and other key stakeholders. There is an abundance of studies, toolkits, web sites, and other information and knowledge resources on these issues. The impact of these materials on policies, programs and donor investments in developing countries will depend heavily on whether or not the materials are directly relevant to the specific challenges faced by donors and their country counterparts in their operational work. It is crucial, therefore, that any effort to "map", and then add to, our knowledge on these issues in a way that is directly relevant to policy and practice should have as its point of departure a needs assessment exercise designed to identify the priority knowledge needs of policy makers, donor staff and other key stakeholders in developing countries.

To help address these needs, the Information for Development Program (infoDev) is commissioning a multi-part study that will build upon and update existing research, add evidence and experience from the field, map the current state of our knowledge of these issues, and recommend a way forward both in the international community's framing of these issues and in urgent priorities for further research and experimentation, all in a context of addressing the priority knowledge needs of policy makers, donors and other key stakeholders.

**Scope of Work**

The commissioned work will have three closely-linked components:
1) a "knowledge needs assessment" that identifies the priority knowledge needs of international donor staff and their country counterparts working on these issues, so as to prioritize and focus the work of components 2 and 3; this needs assessment should be developed on the basis of an extensive group of interviews and field visits with donors, practitioners and developing-country stakeholders, including intensive contacts with at least 5 to 6 of the key international donor agencies active in these subjects and a representative group of at least 6 to 8 developing countries with significant donor involvement in rural development/ICT for the poor/information and communication for rural livelihoods projects. It should be further enriched by online consultation with a broader group of donors, country counterparts, and other key stakeholders working on these issues (including international and local NGOs and private sector partners.)

2) a "knowledge map", detailing the state of available knowledge on the subject of "ICTs and Livelihoods of the Rural Poor", the key issues about which our knowledge and information are still unsufficient, and what seem to be the most urgent priorities in filling some of the gaps identified by that knowledge map, given the priority knowledge needs identified above in Component 1;

3) a "framework paper" of roughly 30-50 pages that offers a way of thinking about the issues of ICT and Livelihoods of the Rural Poor that builds on lessons from previous work (and the knowledge "mapped" in Component 2), frames the issues in the context of our broader understanding of poverty and of the role of ICTs as change agents and tools of innovation, and recommends concrete next steps for infoDev and its donors to develop a broader work program on these issues (including e.g. suggestions for further studies, toolkits, field research, pilot projects). This Framework Paper should include concrete examples and case studies of lessons learned from ICT-for-rural livelihoods interventions and their impact both on the rural poor directly and on the broader economic, social and institutional context.

In all components, the analysis and recommendations should focus on the full range of information and communication technologies, from radio and television to computers, the Internet and mobile phones. The focus should be primarily on the rural poor. A later phase of the work will focus on the contribution of ICT to improving the livelihoods of the urban and peri-urban poor.

Several key issues should be given strong attention in this work:

- The role of key institutions and intermediaries – governmental and non-governmental – that impact the livelihoods of the rural poor, and how ICT can enhance their capacity and effectiveness. (In other words, the work should not restrict its focus to ICT interventions directly targeted at the poor themselves.)
- The linkages between specific ICT interventions to enhance the livelihoods of the rural poor and broader priorities for growth and poverty reduction in rural areas (and the contribution of ICT to those broader goals);
- The role of local government service delivery (on which the rural poor heavily depend) and how ICT can enhance its effectiveness and accountability;
- The role of information and communication technologies in increasing the empowerment and voice of the rural poor in decisions that affect their lives and in holding government officials accountable;
• Impediments to, and incentives for, policy, institutional and behavioral change at the micro, meso and macro levels that would maximize the effectiveness of ICT-for-livelihoods interventions;
• The challenges of striking an appropriate balance between traditional and "new" communication tools and models and the factors – institutional, cultural, etc. -- that affect that balance in specific environments;
• The interdependencies among several dimensions of rural livelihoods (health, agriculture, education, environment, etc.) and the ways in which ICT might help to strengthen positive synergies across these dimensions;
• Recognizing that rural poor are a diverse group comprising different age, gender, socio-economic and ethnic groups, who all can have different information needs and means of communication.

Deliverables

On the basis of the scope of work detailed above, the following Deliverables are expected of this assignment:

Deliverable 1: Knowledge Needs Assessment: This document, based on the extensive research, interviews and analysis detailed in item 1 of the Scope of Work, should present in detail, by theme and by key audience, what are the priority needs of donors, developing country policy makers and other key stakeholders for knowledge, information, data, evidence, toolkits, templates and other knowledge resources and tools in order to effectively mobilize information and communication technologies as sustainable and cost-effective tools in support of the livelihoods of the poor, particularly the rural poor.

Deliverable 2: Knowledge Map: Based on the analysis detailed in item 2 of the Scope of Work, this document should present in detail, by theme, the current state of available information and knowledge about issues related to ICT and livelihoods of the poor (particularly the rural poor), including annotated bibliographic and source information for both print and online knowledge resources. It should also include an annotated directory of key organizations (public, private and non-profit) active in these issues. This mapping exercise should build upon, and make full use of, existing knowledge resources such as the online information resources of the FAO and other key international organizations active on these issues. It should then assess, on the basis of the knowledge needs assessment discussed above, what should be the key priorities for further research, analysis, evidence-gathering, best practice compilation and toolkit/template development to address the most critical knowledge needs of key practitioners and policy makers in this area. This 'knowledge map' should include an electronic version, in a format agreed with infoDev, that is searchable and that can be added to over time as other resources come to light.

Deliverable 3: "Framework Paper" on ICT and Livelihoods of the Poor: Building on the first two elements of this assignment, and taking into account earlier analysis of this issue by organizations active in this field such as FAO, DFID and ODI (references will be provided by infoDev), this paper will provide a general framework for approaching these issues and recommendations for further action by infoDev and its donors.
Deliverable 4: Presentation materials: Based on the work detailed above, the Consultants should prepare and submit a summary presentation in both print and electronic forms, including a Power Point presentation, which synthesizes briefly the key findings, lessons and recommendations derived from all 3 phases of the assignment. These Presentation Materials will serve as an input into a Review Workshop at a location to be determined by infoDev (either in the US or Europe) at which the Consultants will be expected to present their findings to a group of donors, developing country policy makers, international organizations and other key stakeholders and experts.

Consultant Qualifications

The consulting team for this assignment is expected to include experienced professionals with the ability to deliver a complex project within a relatively short period of time. The team should include experts with at least 5-8 years experience in fields related to rural development, information and communication needs of the poor, the impact of information and communication technologies on poverty and development, development research and knowledge management, and related areas relevant to the scope of work.

Preferred Timeline

This indicative timeline will be subject to final negotiation between infoDev and the selected consultants. While the timeline lists the deliverables sequentially, it is expected that the consultants would begin work on all deliverables simultaneously to the extent possible.

- June 30, 2006: Request for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) published
- July 17, 2006: Closing date for submission of EOIs
- July 24, 2006: infoDev invites selected consultant team to submit full technical and financial proposal
- August 14, 2006: Target date for conclusion of grant negotiations with selected team
- September 5, 2006: Draft work plan submitted to infoDev
- November 15, 2006: First draft of Deliverable 1 (Knowledge Needs Assessment)
- December 15, 2006: First draft of Deliverable 2 (Knowledge Map)
- January 15, 2007: First draft of Deliverable 3 (Framework paper and recommendations) and Deliverable 4 (Presentation materials)
- Late January 2007: Review workshop in location to be determined
- February 28, 2007: Final version of all deliverables

Budget

The available lump-sum budget for this assignment, including consulting fees, travel, audit and all related expenses, is $175,000.

About infoDev

infoDev (the Information for Development Program) is an international partnership of bilateral and multilateral development agencies housed at the World Bank in the Global Information and Communications Technologies Group (GICT). Its mission is to assist developing countries and their international partners to effectively use information and communication technologies (ICT) to combat poverty, promote sustainable economic growth and empower individuals and communities to participate more fully and creatively in their societies and economies. (http://www.infodev.org/).