

REPORT ON ICT4D SERIES – SEPTEMBER 2009

THE ROLE OF ICTs IN AGRO MARKETING

This month's session of the Northern ICT4D Series showcased the projects and ICT activities of the Market Access Promotion Network (MAPRONET) and the Association of Church-Based Development NGOs (ACDEP)

Mr. Norbert Apentibadek, in giving a background to ACDEP's ICT Project mentioned that in 2003, ACDEP began to explore other opportunities for communication and information exchange to accelerate community development programmes. The use of ICT as a catalyst for accelerated development emerged strongly as a priority for consideration. To achieve this objective, ACDEP started discussions with IICD on the possibility of harnessing ICTs to accelerate ACDEP's development programmes. He said, in 2004, ACDEP and IICD conducted information needs assessment among ACDEP members to find out what their information needs were and how these needs could be best addressed via ICT. The field visits culminated in a project formulation and information needs analysis workshop. The workshop was used as a start-up to help participants to validate & discuss the information gathered from the field visits, share experiences and assess the potential uses of ICTs.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Mr. Apentibadek mentioned that the purpose of the project is to improve access and use of innovative development information and experiences by rural communities to enhance their socio- economic development. He added that it is also to improve and facilitate communication and information exchange between the secretariat, stations and among participating stations to facilitate extension education & community level knowledge sharing

The key objectives of the project, according to Mr. Apentibadek are to build the capacity of ACDEP Secretariat and its member NGOs to use ICTs, to use ICT to meet the communication and development information needs of ACDEP members and their

beneficiaries and to facilitate the improvement of development oriented information and communication system that allows for networking of persons and institutions involved or interested in ICTs for Development.

On the success stories so far, he mentioned the production of Audio-visual documentaries and other visual aids for community level educational activities, improved communication between stations and secretariat and stations and other development partners, documentation on nutritional activities including stages of development of rehabilitated malnourished children undergoing rehabilitation, deepened community awareness about the potential of ICTs as tools for self-empowerment and development among many others.

SOME LESSONS LEARNT

On some lessons learnt, Mr. Norbert Apentibadek mentioned that there was a high degree of enthusiasm beyond the expectation of the project team to embrace ICT as a novelty for development communication and as a tool for self-empowerment for community development. Also, some stations which hitherto were seemingly averse to the use of ICT for development are enthused about the project idea and looked forward to be selected for future projects. Finally, he mentioned that the challenge of deploying ICTs in rural areas without electricity supply generated some interesting lessons and emerging issues for consideration by development practitioners in rural areas.

It is also interesting to note that as a result of the deployment of ICTs in some of the districts amidst the surging challenges of rural setting, the public image of some of the NGOs have improved

MAPRONET

When he took his turn, Mr. Latif Baako of the Market Access Promotion Network (MAPRONET) mentioned that MAPRONET is a West African modelled network and that MAPRONET Ghana is a growing Network which comprises of 42 member organizations defined in three categories to include producer groups and Associations, facilitating Agencies and Advocacy organizations

Mr. Baako said, the objectives of the network includes the building of capacities of small-scale producers through training in marketing, identification and provision of market information services that brings small-scale producers into contact with markets and increasing their bargaining and negotiation skills.

He mentioned that the methodologies used included collecting and disseminating market information to end users manually through the use of market enumerators, collecting and disseminating marketing information electronically through radio and the internet, collecting and disseminating market information through the use of the mobile phone and providing capacity building trainings to producer groups.

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