Report of the Task Force
on ICT and Development

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Letter to the Minister

8 December 2003

Mr Tom Kitt TD
Minister of State for Development Cooperation and Human Rights
Department of Foreign Affairs
Bishop's Square
Redmond's Hill
Dublin 2

Dear Minister

I am pleased to present the Report of the Taskforce on ICT and Development. The report has been prepared arising from a process of consultation and examination of the challenges to Development Co-Operation Ireland and the developing world in order to benefit from information communications and technology.

I would like to thank the excellent staff in Development Co-Operation Ireland who have assisted in the preparation of this report and to the members of the Task Force who gave so willingly of their time, expertise and views.

Yours sincerely

Aidan Eames
Chairperson
Taskforce on ICT and Development

21 Key Action Point

Development Cooperation Ireland ICT for Development Action Plan

| KEY ACTION POINTS	TIMELINE	KEY ACTION POINTS	TIMELINE
1. Establish an ICT and Development Committee led by DCI and the private sector to drive and monitor progress on the recommendations of the Task Force.	2004	6. Act as a facilitator of voluntary service in the private sector in the form of an ICT Volunteer Corps. DCI can offer initial finance to get new voluntary initiatives off the ground, offer advice on health and security in developing countries, assist in the identification of opportunities for voluntary service and help in the assessment of demands from developing countries for volunteers.	2004
2. Commit up to €15M over 3 years based on new and existing spending in a partnership approach to ICT involving DCI; the private sector and developing countries.	2004-2006		
3. Establish a modular programme to respond to developing country interest in Ireland's recent economic and social progress including the contribution of ICTs to our national development. This can be achieved by establishing a steering group together with Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Communication, Marine and Natural Resources.	2004-2005	5. Establish a Knowledge Management working group within DCI to thoroughly identify the organisation's knowledge management needs and to examine best practice in other donor agencies, government departments and the private sector. A three year operational and infrastructure ICT plan is required for DCI itself based on a current technical evaluation with committed timelines for delivery and agreed budgets.	End March 2004
4. Respond positively to the interest of the World Bank Institute (WBI) in developing a partnership with Ireland on a project designed to identify and share with developing countries the lessons learned from Ireland's progress from a predominantly agricultural based economy to a knowledge based economy.	Early 2004	7. Ask Ireland's embassies in the programme countries to help identify local private sector ICT companies, or Government Departments or agencies, who would wish to enter into a dialogue with the Irish ICT private sector. DCI and embassies in the programme countries should also facilitate the organisation of a round table of interested parties, in country scenario planning and exchange visits.	Ongoing

KEY ACTION POINTS	TIMELINE	KEY ACTION POINTS	TIMELINE
8. Facilitate the development of a register of interested Irish private sector companies who are willing to enter into ICT and development partnerships. Enterprise Ireland may provide appropriate support where commercial opportunities exist for Irish companies. The Irish company might be asked to take on a mentoring role, including the supply of managerial and technical advice, to its developing country partner.	Ongoing	13. Focus on capacity building for the use of ICTs. In particular, consider the use of ICT experts from Ireland on short term assignments within Government Departments, local government, civil society organisations.	Ongoing
9. Include a representative from the private sector on the DCI teams that develop Country Strategy Papers. The private sector representative could assist in preparing strategies and programmes to respond to the expressed needs of the developing country partner.	2004-2006	14. Request the DCI-NGO Forum to consider how cooperation between DCI and the NGOs in the use of ICTs should be strengthened and promoted. This could include consideration of the following: integration of ICTs in development into DCI funding schemes; the inclusion of the ICT private sector in the DCI/NGO discussions; and the eventual development of a joint DCI/NGO/private sector programme with each side bringing funding and/or specialist advice and resources with a focus on the programmes' merits, innovation and impact on poor countries.	2004-2005
10. Develop the current DCI website so that it becomes the central public access point for the DCI programme.	2004-2005		
11. Develop codes of best practice on the use of ICTs for development including the importance of local content and an appropriate regulatory framework	2004	15. Increase the focus on the importance of applied research and development to the application of ICTs in support of poverty reduction in poor countries. The Advisory Board to DCI may also take a lead on this.	2004-2006
12. Conduct a thorough mapping exercise across all DCI activities in the seven programme countries to identify the full extent of current engagement in ICT and development related activities.	End 2004	16. Develop stronger relationships between Irish educationalists and institutions and Governments, international organisations, educational bodies and private companies who are working on distance learning networks.	2004-2005

KEY ACTION POINTS	TIMELINE	KEY ACTION POINTS	TIMELINE
17. - Increase the capacity of DCI in the area of ICT generally to enable it to become an advocate and prime mover in the area in its bilateral and multilateral programmes. - Focus new ICT interventions on local government, local enterprise and the strengthening of civil society organisations. - Include within the terms of DCI's Area Based Programmes an explicit provision which promotes the use of ICTs across all sectors of society to achieve development objectives. Include within DCI's evaluations of Area Based Programmes an analysis of how ICTs have (or have not) contributed to the objectives of the Programme. - Advocate for the incorporation of ICTs into national budgets, Sector Wide Approaches, Area Based Programmes and PRSPs	Ongoing	19. Identify with UNDP and the respective Governments in Ethiopia and Mozambique, which are two of its programme countries, how best DCI can support the implementation of ICT national strategies, with a particular focus on capacity building including through the use of Irish ICT volunteers and exchange programmes.	2004
		20. Support the Global Development Learning Network (GDLN). The GDLN could also provide a potential opportunity for linking interested Irish institutions with World Bank managed distance learning programmes.	2004
		21. Discuss with the NEPAD secretariat in South Africa how best DCI might support NEPAD's action programme in the ICT area, including through the provision of Irish expertise on short-term assignments.	2004
18. Participate actively in international efforts to develop strategies and policies to deal with the concerns of developing countries on the widening digital divide. This will require greater coordination and coherence in our national approach to multilateral negotiations on ICT issues.	2004-2005		

Key Principles

In implementing its ICT and Development Strategy, DCI should be guided by the following key principles, based on those principles set out in the Ireland Aid Review Committee's final report of February 2002:

- As an integral part of DCI's aid programme, the ICT Strategy should also have as its absolute priority the reduction of poverty, inequality and exclusion in developing countries.

- It should incorporate a high degree of partnership with recipient countries, with the international donor community, as well as with NGOs, the private sector and academia at both home and abroad.

- The integration of ICTs into DCI's programmes should be underpinned by the principles of value for money, transparency and accountability.

- Funding for ICT activities should remain completely untied and the activities should be viewed as a means to an end and not an end in themselves driven, in the first instance, by the needs and demands of the recipient country.

- The integration of ICTs should be based on a holistic approach to combating poverty and fully incorporated into the country-owed poverty reduction strategy process as well as the objectives of gender equality and environmental protection.

- The use of ICTs should make a particular contribution to good governance and the fight against corruption by making government decision-making and financial transactions more transparent

Untied Aid

Ownership
Gender Equality
Environmental
Protection

POVERTY REDUCTION

Value for Money
Transparency
Accountability

Good Governance

Partnership
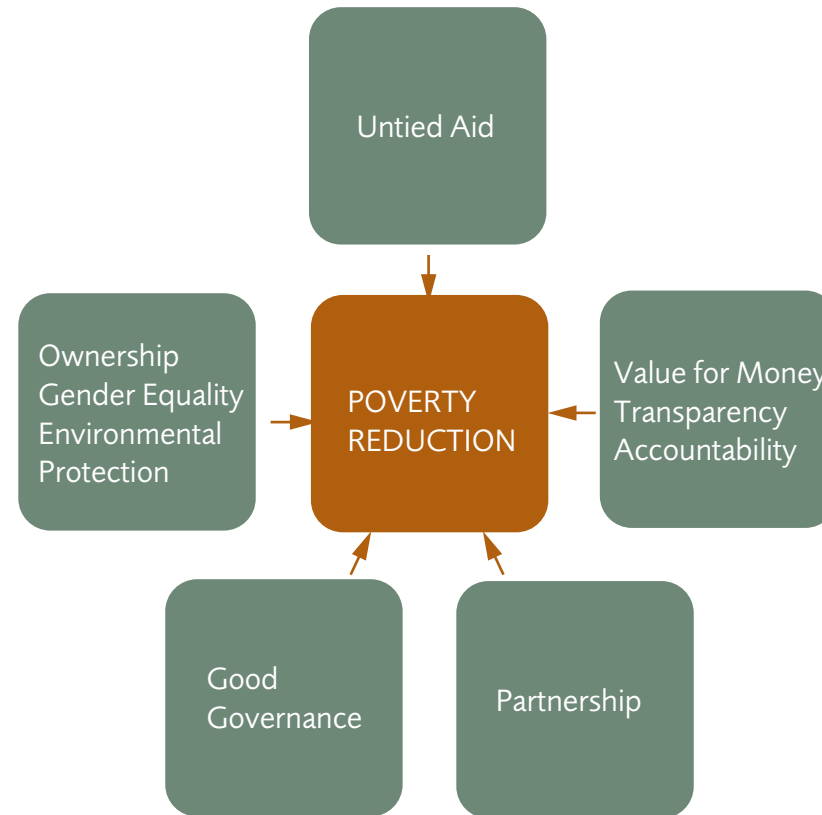
Chapter 1:
ICT and Development

CHAPTER 1: ICT AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

1.1 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) provide the foundation for the knowledge society that is transforming economic and social conditions in developed and developing countries. These technologies are rapidly being integrated into all aspects of life in developed countries such that governments and businesses, producers and consumers, teachers and students, doctors and patients are all using them to improve productivity, gain access to information and make government and civil society organisations more transparent. Ireland itself has been a very significant economic beneficiary of ICTs which have underpinned our economic growth over the past decade.

1.2 Developing countries and international development organisations are increasingly focused on the potential of ICTs as tools for development. A multitude of efforts are now being made to use them to address developing country needs.

1.3 Ireland is seen by many developing countries as an economy which, building on sustained investment in education, has managed to use ICTs to modernise and to attract a high level of foreign direct investment. We have set ourselves very high objectives in the areas of international broadband access, internet penetration levels and the development of e-government. As Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI) works to use the new technologies in support of its development objectives, the Task Force believes that it should take our national experience and reputation as an economy that has benefited from innovation and job creation in the ICT sector into account and seek to use the high level of expertise in ICTs available in both the private and public sectors in Ireland.

1.4 Many countries that have seen significant growth in the use of ICTs have also grappled with the problem of inequality of access both within and between countries. In developed countries the scale and speed of technological innovation have resulted in considerable reductions in costs which in turn have opened new opportunities for development. These opportunities are not so easily grasped in developing countries where the social, economic and political context is substantially different from that in developed countries. While the gap between countries in the development of fixed and mobile telecommunications has to some extent narrowed, a "digital divide" has emerged with regard to the more advanced information infrastructure and this is still growing. Some developing countries, particularly the poorest, are falling further behind in their efforts to participate fully in and benefit from the "information revolution". The gap is at its most stark in sub Saharan Africa.

1.5 In the context of low literacy levels, limited access to electricity and basic infrastructure the challenge of harnessing ICTs for development becomes most apparent. DCI's strategy, in order to realise the poverty reducing potential of ICTs, therefore needs to address these existing constraints in the context of DCIs overall development objectives.

1.6 In the context of developing countries, it is also important that ICTs are seen and treated as a broad range of technologies and tools for sharing and using information that extends beyond computers and telephone networks to include more traditional media such as radio, television and video. In these countries relevant information can often be shared most effectively through a combination of new media such as the Internet,

television, and traditional media such as community radio, newspapers and books. The important element is that the information needs of the poor are satisfied by applicable technology.

DCI Objectives

1.7 The Report of the Ireland Aid Review Committee, which was endorsed by the Government in April 2001, recommended that it *"should have as its absolute priority the reduction of poverty, inequality and exclusion in developing countries;"* The Review Committee also stressed that *"Anti-poverty strategies should embrace action to break the vicious circle of poverty through support for sustainable indigenous development . policies and activities should be gauged against their contribution in this respect and their ability to achieve progress towards the development targets set by the international community."* This recommendation is in the context of the commitment by the Government in September 2000 that Ireland would reach the UN aid target of 0.7% of GNP by 2007. Development Cooperation Ireland, with strong human and financial resources, and with its own programmes embodying internationally recognised best practice, should be well-placed to realise Ireland's leadership potential. The so-called "digital divide", the increasing gap between rich and poor countries in their access to information and communications technologies, has attracted significant international attention. There is a new focus both on bridging the divide and on efforts to harness the new technologies with a view to creating more effective programmes of development cooperation. The establishment of the UN Taskforce on Information and Communications Technology, on which Ireland is represented, will help in the development of ICT strategies at a global level. Ireland's membership of the Task Force provides it with an opportunity to bring the lessons learned at national level to international attention.

1.8 This focus on poverty reduction is reflected in the existing geographical focus of the programme in sub Saharan Africa where the concentration of people living on less than $1 per day is higher than anywhere else in the world. The fact that DCI operates in some of the poorest countries in the world presents DCI with fundamental challenges to harnessing the potential of ICTs in its development programme.

1.9 The recommendations of the Review Committee also reflect the fact that DCI is committed to a set of internationally agreed poverty reduction targets set at the beginning of the new millennium known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals include specific development targets across a range of issues such as poverty, hunger, child and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and education. They have been adopted by the international community and all development programmes, both bilateral and multilateral, are oriented towards the achievement of the goals.

1.10 The difficulties many African countries face in harnessing ICTs for their development stem from a wider development gap and are rooted in the problems caused by extreme poverty. Countries where the majority of adults are illiterate, where HIV/AIDS prevalence rates are above 20% of the adult population, where domestic financial resources are constrained through falls in commodity prices and high levels of debt simply do not have the resources or the technological know-how to invest and benefit from the most modern ICT technologies. At the same time, these technologies offer the best possibility to these countries of leap-frogging intermediate and expensive technology phases (such as the need for extensive land telephone lines) and of using them to overcome fundamental development challenges.

1.11 In its discussions, the Task Force agreed that ICTs are a powerful tool which should be used to strengthen development interventions. However, the Task Force also stressed that ICTs are not a panacea for development. They are not an end in themselves but should be used as an instrument to further well thought out, well established and properly resourced development programmes. The Task Force also concluded that while the use of ICT interventions should be demand driven and should not be imposed as a result of donor prerogatives, this should be tempered by the necessity to avoid missing the development benefits of ICTs where the absence of demand arose from a lack of information of their potential to address the needs of the poor. The sharing of information and expertise by donors can be appropriate in many situations.

1.12 The following table illustrates the broad relationship between DCI's poverty objectives and the MDGs. It also suggests a potential role for the use of ICTs in contributing to progress towards the Goals and how despite the challenges there are opportunities for ICTs to offer assistance in achieving them.

Millennium Development Goal	DCI Development Objectives	Role of ICTs
■ Reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half between 1990 and 2015	■ Reduction of poverty, inequality and exclusion in developing countries ■ Build capacity in developing countries through strategic partnerships	■ Increase access to market information and reduce transaction costs for poor farmers and traders ■ Increase efficiency, competitiveness and market access of developing country firms ■ Enhance ability of developing countries to participate in global economy and to exploit comparative advantage in factor costs (particularly skilled labour)
■ Reduce infant and child mortality rates by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015 ■ Reduce maternal mortality rates by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015 ■ Provide access to all who need reproductive health services by 2015	■ Cross cutting priority to tackle HIV/Aids	■ Enhance delivery of basic and in-service training for health workers ■ Increase monitoring and information-sharing on disease and famine ■ Increase access of rural care-givers to specialist support and remote diagnosis ■ Increase access to reproductive health information, including information on AIDS prevention, through locally-appropriate content in local languages
■ Implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2005 so as to reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015	■ Develop strong national capacity for policy and strategy development and planning ■ Sustainable development ■ Cross-cutting priority to improve governance	■ Remote sensing technologies and communications networks permit more effective monitoring, resource management, mitigation of environmental risks ■ Increase access to/awareness of sustainable development strategies, in areas such as agriculture, sanitation and water management, mining, etc. ■ Greater transparency and monitoring of environmental abuses/enforcement of environmental regulations ■ Facilitate knowledge exchange and networking among policy makers, practitioners and advocacy groups
■ Enrol all children in primary schools by 2015 ■ Make progress toward gender equality and empowering women by eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005	■ Cross-cutting priority to reduce gender based inequality	■ Increase supply of trained teachers through ICT-enhanced and distance training of teachers and networks that link teachers to their colleagues ■ Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education ministries and related bodies through strategic application of technologies and ICT-enabled skill development ■ Broaden availability of quality educational resources through ICTs ■ Deliver educational and literacy programmes specifically targeted to poor girls & women using appropriate technologies ■ Influence public opinion on gender equality through information/communication programmes using a range of ICTs

Partnership

1.13 DCI is committed to achieving its objectives through working in partnership. The Review committee recommended that, *"It should incorporate a high degree of partnership with recipient countries and also with the international donor community and NGOs both at home and abroad. In designing its programmes, it should take as its point of departure the development vision of the recipient country."*

1.14 DCI, in its bilateral development assistance programmes, supports its partner countries in the preparation and implementation of their own sectoral and national development policies and strategies.   DCI has supported partner governments in preparing Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). It provides its funding support to government programmes aimed at achieving the PRSP objectives, which reflect national priorities in the fight against extreme poverty.

The role of the Private Sector

1.15 As DCI increasingly uses ICTs as a tool to achieve its development objectives, it should also increasingly focus on the key role played by the ICT private sector. In Ireland the private sector, both indigenous and multinational, provides a huge resource of expert knowledge. Private sector expertise in such areas as low cost connectivity options, open source software, multi-media applications for use in teaching and training, localisation of content and other areas should be supported to the benefit of DCI programmes. In addition, there is considerable scope for DCI, together with Enterprise Ireland, to act as a facilitator of partnerships between private sector companies in Ireland and their counterparts in DCI's programme countries.

Cross-cutting issues

1.16 DCI's programme has integrated a number of fundamental development issues in all areas of its activities. These cross-cutting issues are HIV/AIDS, gender, governance and environmental degradation. The DCI strategy on ICTs and development must also support efforts to deal with these cross cutting issues.

1.17 One of the most fundamental areas that ICTs can contribute to poverty reduction is the empowerment of individuals and communities through improved access to information and communication. Ensuring equality of access to ICTs is a growing concern and has particular relevance to gender focused development approaches. It is essential that the threat of further exclusion for women in particular, due to male control over the technologies themselves and gender-based inequalities in literacy, economic resources and social status, is addressed.

1.18 ICTs can make a major contribution to good governance and the fight against corruption by making government decision-making and financial transactions more transparent. ICTs underpin the spread of information away from small circles at the centre of government. This can happen when ICTs are introduced into comprehensive governance programmes which build the political will and oversight mechanisms necessary for democratic accountability.

1.19 The availability of information on transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS forms the basis for most of the programmes aimed at curbing the spread of the pandemic. For those living with HIV/AIDS in rural communities in poor countries, limited access means that the Internet is unlikely to be a

direct source of information. However multimedia formats such as CD-ROMs, DVDs, radio and television programmes can be used to reach millions of people who otherwise might have no access to information. Organisations helping those infected in developing countries are able to use e-mail and the Internet to access high-quality information which then can be disseminated more widely through the technologies mentioned above. ICTs and private sector expertise will also be highly important as developing countries roll out HIV/AIDS drug treatment regimes. The World Health Organisation's target of treating 3 million HIV/AIDS infected people in poor countries by 2005 (the so-called "3 by 5" initiative) will need to be underpinned by more extensive use of ICTs in health systems.

Key issues

1.20 The overriding objective of the DCI development programme is its commitment to poverty reduction. The importance it attributes to the cross-cutting issues of gender, HIV/AIDS, governance and the environment, and its strong emphasis on partnership also provide the context for DCI in supporting ICT related interventions in its development programme.

1.21 The deployment of ICTs in support of development in DCI's programme countries will require a significant strengthening of the capacity of DCI itself, the partner governments, civil society organisations and private enterprise to make effective use of the technologies. In all of DCI's programme countries capacity constraints are a major obstacle to development. Weak education systems, low numbers of people completing secondary or tertiary education and high levels of illiteracy result in a small pool of well trained and capable officials, entrepreneurs and civic leaders.

1.22 As its works with its programme countries to harness the power of ICTs, DCI will also have to focus on over-coming capacity constraints. Key partners in this work will be the voluntary sector in Ireland, and the individuals, companies and learning institutions who make up the ICT sector. This is where the expertise resides. ICT volunteers should be used by DCI to underpin its capacity building programme in ICTs.

1.23 Given the scale of resources available to DCI and the strong emphasis on the partnership approach, the Task Force believes that DCI's strategic approach to ICTs should be based on the existing thematic structure of its programme. This means that the use of ICTs should be complementary to the current programme approach and should result in accelerated and efficient progress towards improving the livelihoods of the poor. DCI should develop a core competency in ICT for development and become an advocate and prime mover in this area. DCI should use the Irish ICT experience and expertise as well as private sector input in a manner that is dynamic and that focuses on enterprise and is consistent with DCI development principles. The Task Force also emphasises that the use of ICTs in the programme will require strong cooperation between DCI and the private ICT sectors in Ireland and in DCI's developing country partners. The private sector has been the driving force in the development and application of ICTs. Its technological know-how and innovative capacity must be drawn into DCI's efforts to support ICTs for development.

1.24 The range and multiplicity of ICTs and the complexity of their impact on development give rise to a range of important issues regarding their application. The Taskforce examined ICTs through the lens of DCI policies and objectives and has identified the following key ICT issues that are of strategic importance to the achievement of DCI's development objectives:

- Broad and Equitable Access

- ICT Policy, Strategy and Regulation

- Good Governance

- Effective and Efficient ICT Use in Public Service Provision

1.25 The Taskforce examined these issues in the context of DCI's Bilateral, Multilateral and Civil Society programmes and of Ireland's unique capacity and experience in the development and use of ICTs. The following chapters outline the opportunities that the Taskforce has identified in each of these areas for furthering the objectives of DCI programmes through the appropriate use of ICTs.

Broad and Equitable Access

1.26 Empowerment is one of the fundamental areas where ICTs can contribute to poverty reduction, particularly through more equal access to knowledge and information. The corresponding risk is that, as ICTs become cheaper and easier to use, local elites will use them to reinforce their economic and political position. Initiatives to use ICTs as a means of increasing access to information need to be carefully targeted to ensure that access is equitable so that the use of information reduces inequality.

1.27 The discrimination suffered by women and other disadvantaged groups results in lower levels of literacy or education, limited access to economic assets and little influence in local and national decision-making processes. All of these factors impose limitations to their access to ICTs. If these limitations are specifically and effectively addressed in the formulation and implementation of ICT interventions, ICTs can become an effective tool for the empowerment of women and other victims of exclusion.

ICT Policy, Strategy and Regulation

1.28 If ICTs are to be used successfully in support of poverty reduction, there must be an enabling domestic environment conducive to attracting investment into the ICT sector. Such an enabling environment includes a regulatory framework that facilitates competition and the entry of new operators, both national and international into the domestic market. Independence and transparency of national regulatory authorities is essential to create investor confidence and to permit informed debate on national ICT priorities. A stable national economy free from conflict will also facilitate the successful use of ICTs in poverty reduction.

1.29 It is also essential that the potential of ICTs is made available to key groups outside of central government such as local government, civil society organisations, NGOs and local enterprise. It is important that national e-strategies and e-readiness campaigns focus on the widespread dissemination of ICTs across all sectors of society and do not have an over-emphasis on the use of ICTs to support central government functions. If the use of the Internet, for example, is not to be confined to the urban rich and to third level academic institutions, it is vital that access spreads beyond urban elites into peri-urban and rural areas. Pro-active policy and regulation is essential for this to happen.

1.30 Local community-managed broadcast media provide the opportunity for communities to interact and exchange opinions on their development issues and needs. It also can be an important and effective mechanism for local democracy, transparency and accountability. For radio or television to fulfil these functions, national policy, legislation and regulation must actively promote the emergence of independent and local focussed community-based broadcasters that are relevant and interesting to local people and that promote local cultures.

1.31 The Task Force strongly believes that policy formulation and regulatory reform are fundamental to the global effort to bridge the digital divide. They are also essential to the future success of DCI's ICT strategy. In this regard the expertise on telecom regulation issues available in the public and private sectors in Ireland provide an invaluable resource to the DCI programme.

Good Governance

1.32 ICTs facilitate the spread of information. They promote accountability and transparency in the public and private sectors thereby frustrating the efforts of corrupt elites. ICTs alone, however, cannot achieve such governance objectives. In countries where Governments lack transparency, and decision-making is deliberately opaque to conceal corruption and allow the promotion of particular interests, ICTs can be instruments for centralising power and decision making in the existing oligarchies rather than an opportunity for empowerment of the poor.

1.33 A good governance environment - meaning the political commitment to democracy, transparency, accountability and human rights – is a key requirement if ICTs are to further progress on governance goals.

However, even in cases where governance is poor, and corruption and human rights abuses are widespread, ICTs counteract government efforts to control the flow of information. Civil society, empowered with ICTs, can link into international networks of human rights organisations, media and other agents of change to highlight poor governance records and promote democracy and accountability.

an important contribution to using ICTs to make public service provision more efficient. The introduction of ICTs into public procurement, for example, is an area where we have expertise. This is also an area which holds huge promise for poor developing countries bearing the burden of corrupt procurement practices resulting in huge additional unnecessary expenditure.

Effective and Efficient ICT Use in Public Service Provision

1.34 Networking, or the sharing of useful and relevant information between individuals and organisations, is crucial to the development of effective and efficient public administrations and the implementation of poverty reduction strategies. Improved networking can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Government employees and can also contribute towards more open and transparent government information systems.

1.35 The challenge of networking civil servants and government departments is to encourage a willingness to input a flow of relevant and high quality information into ICT networks. In some cases donors have supported the purchase and deployment of ICT hardware, only to find that the investments fail as government employees may be reluctant to share information through the new networked system, preferring to keep key pieces of information within small groups of insiders. The sharing of information through networks is intimately associated with the diffusion of power and decision-making away from closed groups at the centre into a wider circle of policy makers. For ICT investments to result in increased effectiveness and efficiency it is essential that both the political will and appropriate incentives exist for the required changes in working practices to take place.

1.36 Ireland, an international leader in the area of E-government, can make

Chapter 2:
The Bilateral Programme

CHAPTER 2: THE BILATERAL PROGRAMME

Programme approaches

2.1 The DCI bilateral programme is focussed in the Sub-Saharan Africa region on the six countries of Mozambique, Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Lesotho. There is also a new country programme in Timor Leste. Chapter 1 described how DCI's approach to development cooperation is based on working in partnership with developing country governments.

2.2 The consequence of this approach has been that, over the last ten years, the nature of Ireland's development assistance programme has changed fundamentally. Large stand alone projects, funded exclusively by Ireland and implemented and managed by Irish personnel, have been replaced by support for the preparation and implementation of sectoral and national poverty reduction strategies. These are designed in consultative processes led by Government and involving donors and civil society.

2.3 DCI supports its partner governments with funding and policy dialogue to develop and implement national programmes in priority areas such as health, education, water, sanitation and rural roads. In some cases DCI also provides direct budgetary support to the exchequer in collaboration with other donors in order to support basic service provision.

2.4 At local level DCI provides support through Area Based Programmes to local governments and communities to formulate and implement their own local development plans. This local level engagement enables DCI to directly support service provision and development actions targeting and involving the poor. It also provides an important 'reality check' that informs its policy dialogue at national level.

2.5 DCI's programme of bilateral assistance is highly regarded both by its developing country partners and internationally. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee has praised the partnership approach and the fact that DCI's budget is not tied to the use of Irish companies or the provision of Irish services.

2.6 During the work of the Taskforce it has become apparent that significant and increasing investments in ICTs are already being made within all of DCI's bilateral programmes. It is important that these ongoing investments are appraised in the context of their impact on poverty and in light of the issues identified in Chapter 1:

- broad and equitable access;
- ICT policy, strategy and regulation;
- good governance;
- effective and efficient ICT use in public service provision;
- impact on the poor.

DCI Mapping Exercise

2.7 From its discussions with DCI staff, its visits to the field and the two pilot projects it has supervised, the Task Force, as mentioned above, is conscious that DCI is already engaged in supporting a number of significant ICT related programmes in its programme countries. Indeed investments in ICTs exist in all programme areas. They arise as part of sector development strategies in areas such as health, education, and water supply and sanitation; they are central to some of the wider public sector reform and governance programmes and, usually, are an element of capacity building at local level in Area Based Programmes.

> **Recommendation:** DCI should conduct a thorough mapping exercise across all of its activities in the seven programme countries to identify the full extent of its current engagement in ICT and development related activities.

An Initial Focus on Area Based Programmes

2.8 DCI should, throughout the bilateral programme, actively seek opportunities to use ICTs as a tool for development.

> **Recommendation:** DCI should over time, and in dialogue with partner Governments, other donors and international organisations, develop codes of best practice on the use of ICTs for development which are based on evidence of the successful use of these technologies to achieve real gains in poverty reduction.

2.9 Area Based Programmes provide a particular opportunity to pilot the use of ICT to support development. Interventions at this level can more easily be innovative, demand driven and locally appropriate.

> **Recommendation:** DCI's new ICT interventions should focus on local government, local enterprise and the strengthening of civil society organisations.

At a community level radio can help to extend the reach of education programmes and make them more accessible through the use of local languages. In Ethiopia DCI has funded the development of a community radio station for this purpose as part of the Area Based Programme in the Southern Region. Sidama Radio was built in 1997 and broadcasts education programmes Monday to Friday throughout the two academic semesters. At weekends community development programmes are broadcast on subjects such as health including HIV/AIDS, research findings and local development and culture.

A Stronger Advocacy Role

2.10 Within its programme countries, DCI is in a strong position to advocate for the effective use of ICTs as a tool for the achievement of development objectives identified in PRSPs.

> **Recommendation:** DCI's Area Based Programmes should include within their terms of reference an explicit provision which promotes the use of ICTs across all sectors of society to achieve development objectives. DCI's evaluations of Area Based Programmes should include an analysis of how ICTs have (or have not) contributed to the objectives of the Programme.

2.11 In its participation in budget support, Sector Wide Approaches and Area Based Programmes, DCI should advocate the use of ICTs to achieve national poverty objectives. When embassies and DCI's Technical Section analyse national budgets and public expenditure plans, national and sectoral strategies in areas such as public sector reform, good governance, health, education and HIV/AIDS, they should enter into a dialogue with Governments about their ICT plans and strategies. Analysis of a partner country's development challenges and opportunities within DCI should incorporate the contribution of ICTs to the achievement of development objectives.

As DCI becomes a bigger donor to nationally owned PRSPs and within specific sectors, it will have increasing opportunities to advocate and use ICTs to support development. The Task Force strongly believes that this presents an important opportunity for DCI to work more closely with the private and public sectors in Ireland. When, for example, DCI engages

on an analysis of a sector programme in support of basic education, it should explore the use of distance learning, e-education through Internet based applications, virtual education systems and other innovative ICT systems. This will require input from private sector companies and Government Departments in Ireland who have experience in these areas. It is already clear that there is huge interest in these new systems in Africa where the new Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), a new programme for Africa's development supported by the African Union, gives a high priority to the use of ICTs for development.

> **Recommendation:** DCI should become an advocate for the incorporation of ICTs into national budgets, Sector Wide Approaches, Area Based Programmes and PRSPs.

2.13 At the operational level in the bilateral programme, the Task Force believes there is considerable scope to link interested Irish educational institutions with existing efforts to develop the use of distance learning education in the programme countries. In the past, there have been some examples of Irish third level institutions participating in distance learning schemes. However a more strategic and focussed effort is now needed which takes into account the rapid development of distance learning technologies and their increased penetration in many African countries.

2.14 DCI, through its domestic outreach programme in Ireland, should work to develop stronger relationships between Irish educationalists and institutions and Governments, international organisations, educational bodies and private companies who are developing distance learning networks. As the education sector in Ireland has significant experience in the delivery high quality courses to students from a large number of countries, it has a potentially very significant contribution to make to the course content provided through distance learning.

> **Recommendation:** DCI, through its domestic outreach programme in Ireland, should work to develop stronger relationships between Irish educationalists and institutions and Governments, international organisations, educational bodies and private companies who are developing distance learning networks.

Capacity Building and Volunteers

2.15 In its support for sector programmes in health, education and governance, DCI often focuses its assistance on the specific area of capacity building. In this context, DCI should also focus on capacity building for the use of ICTs. In assessing how best to channel its support in this area, DCI should draw on the contribution of ICT volunteers from Ireland. DCI should, for example, consider the use of ICT experts from Ireland on short term assignments within government departments, local government, civil society organisations or the local private sector to help build capacity for the use of ICTs. The work of these volunteers would be a component of DCI's overall support for the specific sector. The volunteers should be given a specific assignment, agreed with the local partner, designed to build sustainable capacity. As well as North-South assignments, DCI should consider how it can facilitate exchanges of ICT personnel on a South-North basis whereby southern partners would gain access to Northern private sector facilities, training and other potential areas of partnership. This would also benefit Irish ICT volunteers as they would gain a more focused and inclusive approach to the challenges of the developing world.

> **Recommendation**: DCI should also focus on capacity building for the use of ICTs. In particular, DCI should consider the use of ICT experts from Ireland on short term assignments within Government Departments, local government and civil society organisations.

ICTs, Human Rights and Governance

2.16 DCI should use the influence that comes with its involvement in budget support and Sector Wide Approaches to ensure that national telecommunications policy allows for widespread access to the Internet and the local ownership of independent community based radios.

In South Africa, the Soul City multimedia project, supported by DCI, has received worldwide acclaim for tackling the issue of HIV/AIDS through a process of "edu-tainment" using the characters in a television and radio programme to raise awareness. The shows promote discussion and information exchange through integrated television and radio soap operas. Additional printed materials are made for schools and health clinics and local language newspapers serialisations using the same characters popularised in the show.

Using ICTs to strengthen Civil Society

2.17 The process of preparing, monitoring and reviewing PRSPs is itself one that can benefit greatly from ICT use. Innovative use of ICTs can facilitate national debate and ensure that views and opinions of civil society organisations and the more remote and poorer population groups contribute to policy making.   E-mail networks, on-line communities and virtual discussion groups can facilitate the continuous engagement of both civil society in the debates involved in the PRSP planning process.

2.18 More broadly, it is important to ensure that the power of ICTs is also available to sectors who seek to hold Governments accountable, to those who are playing a key role in building up the private sector and to those, such as development NGOs and missionaries, who are supporting development programmes at the local and community level.

Recommendation: In all of its dialogue with partner Governments, at political and technical level, DCI should actively promote an enabling environment for the widespread diffusion of ICTs and information generally. In many instances this dialogue might be incorporated into an existing wider human rights agenda which seeks to strengthen governance through greater access to information.

2.19 In Tanzania the Government, UNDP, Sweden, Finland and Norway funded the establishment of an internet gateway to information on development issues in Tanzania. Tanzania Online (www.tzonline.org) seeks to address problems faced by Government officials, policy makers, private sector, civil society, donor community, researchers and academicians accessing information on development issues in Tanzania. The website is hosted by the Economic and Social Research Foundation and expects to improve access and exchange of information among and between government, the public, donors, private sector, civil society, researchers and academicians. The website provides an interactive facility for easy access to a comprehensive set of documents about development in Tanzania, analytic work about priorities in development and progress towards poverty reduction and other development targets.

> **Recommendation:** DCI should also seek to use ICTs to strengthen the role of key civil society organisations, NGOs and the private sector in the programme countries.

ICTs and Health

2.20 A new and vital area in health will be the roll out of HIV/AIDS treatment programmes integrated into existing health systems. The delivery of anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs through weak health systems to hundreds of thousands of infected people will require significant capacity building, including in the use and deployment of ICTs. ICTs can be used to track purchases of ARVs and their use nationwide, to develop registers of patients, to monitor patient compliance with ARV therapies and to check if increased resistance to ARVs is developing.

2.21 DCI is playing a leading role with the Clinton Foundation in supporting the development of a national HIV/AIDS treatment regime, as part of the national HIV/AIDS strategy in Mozambique.

2.22 ICTs are also being used in distance diagnosis and the provision of specialist advice to medical practitioners. However, this powerful potential use of ICTs is still at a relatively early stage of development and is only now beginning to spread in developed countries. The leading institutes in this area are in the US, where the concept of eHealth is at its most advanced. Again there is a facilitating role to be played by DCI in bringing Irish medical organisations into the international debate on the application of ICTs to the delivery of specialist medical services. It is important that medical specialists in Ireland should be aware of and involved in this rapidly developing area.

> **Recommendation**: In focussing funding on capacity building for the delivery of HIV/AIDS treatment, DCI should discuss with the Government how it intends to use ICTs in the roll out of the treatment regime.

2.23 ICTs have a well proven track record of supporting increased efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of routine medical care. It is important that as Governments in DCI's programme countries devote increased funding to health system strengthening that ICTs are built into national health strategies. As mentioned above, there is an important role for DCI, through its deep involvement in health sector wide approaches, to discuss with Governments their ICT plans in the health sector.

### The Preparation of Country Strategy Papers

2.24 Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) provide the basis for DCI's development cooperation activities in the programme countries. They are negotiated between DCI and the partner Government in consultation with civil society and other donors. They are multi-annual and cover activities over a three year period. ICTs can also play a role in increasing Irish NGOs' inputs into the development of CSPs.

If DCI is to use ICTs as a tool for development, CSPs will have to pay greater attention to the partner Government's ICT needs. CSP planning

missions should, therefore, include ICT and development in their terms of reference. Discussions with ministries on issues such as health, education and governance should embrace the use of ICTs based on the partners expressed needs The CSPs should reflect the outcome of these discussions. In detailing how DCI intends to focus its support on key service delivery areas such as health and education, the CSP should, whenever possible, set out an ICT component to DCI's country strategy in consultation with the partner Government and based on the potential contribution of ICTs to poverty reduction objectives.

2.26 In working with Governments DCI should increasingly use ICTs as a tool to achieve its objectives in these crucial sectors. DCI should, therefore, develop an ICT component in the strategies and guidelines which govern the delivery of aid. A Senior Development Specialist in DCI's Technical Section should be tasked with "ICT proofing" PRSPs, strategies in health, education and governance and DCI's own Country Strategy Papers.

> **Recommendation:** In focussing funding on capacity building for the delivery of HIV/AIDS treatment, DCI should discuss with the Government how it intends to use ICTs in the roll out of the treatment regime.
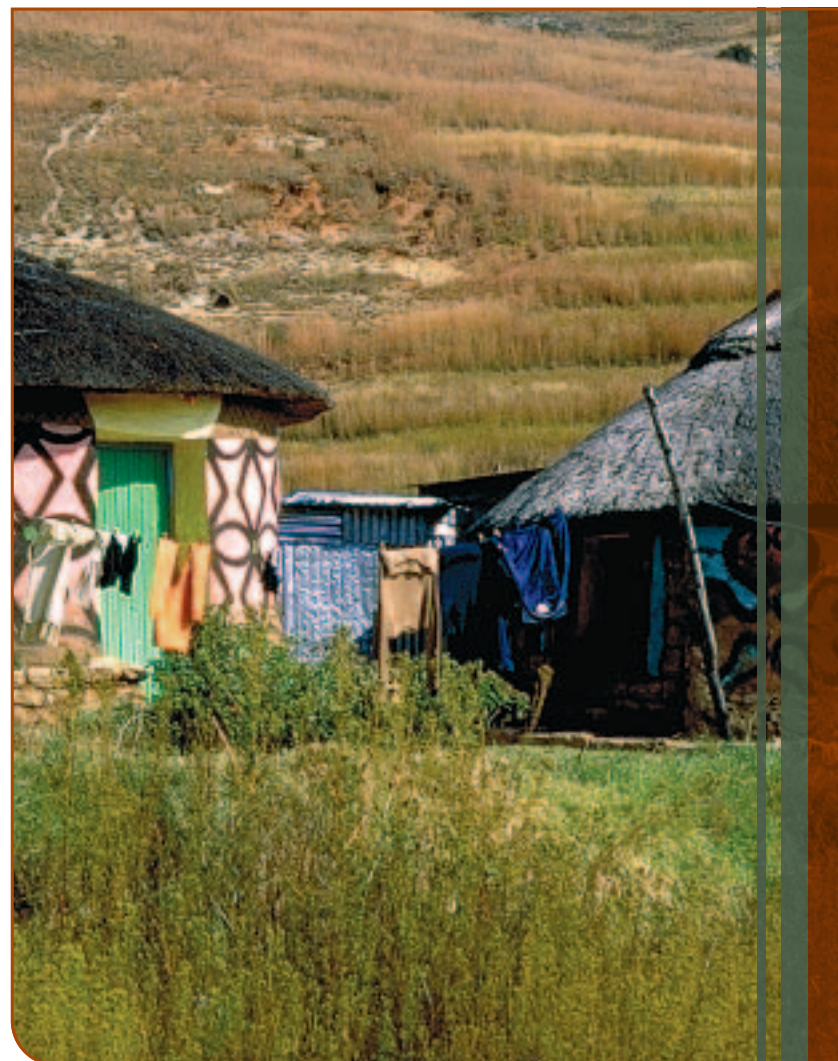
CHAPTER 3:
THE MULTILATERAL PROGRAMME

3.1 The United Nations has been instrumental in drawing global attention to the emergence of a digital divide. The Report of the UN Secretary General to the Millennium Summit of world leaders in September 2000 devoted considerable attention to the digital divide and proposed a number of initiatives designed to bridge the divide. Subsequently, the Ministerial segment of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) debated the issue in July 2001 on the basis of a major report by the UN Secretary General. ECOSOC's discussion resulted in the establishment of the UN ICT Task Force, of which Ireland is a member, which advises on policy issues at the global level relating to the harnessing of ICTs for development.

3.2 In December 2003, there will be a World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva under the auspices of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the Government of Switzerland. The WSIS will look at all aspects of the information society, including the digital divide and such issues as capacity building, local content, funding, open source software and cybersecurity. One of the Summit's unique features is the close involvement of the private sector and NGOs in the preparatory process.

3.3 The Summit will be an opportunity to take stock of the extent of the current digital divide and efforts to deal with poor countries concerns with access to technology and information It is divided into two halves, the second half will take place in Tunisia in 2005. The latter Summit is likely to focus on the negotiation of a new Charter of Digital Rights. Preparations for the second Summit are scheduled to begin during Ireland's Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2004.

3.4 Ireland is a committed member of the United Nations. We believe that multilateral discussions and negotiations are essential for the forging of common solutions to global problems.

Recommendation: Ireland should play an active role in the international efforts to develop strategies and policies to deal with the concerns of developing countries on the widening digital divide. A stronger and more visible role for Ireland in these negotiations will require greater coordination and coherence in our national approach to multilateral negotiations on ICT issues.

Focus

3.5 DCI's engagement in multilateral fora and organisations complements the approach to development assistance in its bilateral programmes. DCI uses its involvement in multilateral organisations to ensure that that the programmes operated by these bodies are compatible with national development priorities. The delivery of assistance by UN funds, programmes and specialised agencies should be co-ordinated with that of other donors and with Governments' own investments in public expenditure.

3.6 Chapter 1 identified the following key strategic issues that need to be addressed in order to maximise the contribution that ICTs can make to poverty reduction:

- broad and equitable access;
- ICT policy, strategy and regulation;
- good governance;
- effective and efficient ICT use in public service provision;
- Impact on the poor.

3.7 These issues should also provide the focus for DCI involvement with multilateral initiatives and debate on ICTs and development. DCI should ensure that the lessons from the practical experience gained through its bilateral programmes are effectively communicated multilaterally. The objective should be to ensure that the significant resources channelled through multilateral programmes result in value-for-money investments that are effective in furthering the Millennium Development Goals and in line with DCI's goals and objectives.

The Global eSchools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI) , promoted by Ireland and Sweden at the UN ICT Task Force, seeks to empower local communities by providing access to global information networks through the provision of internet access in local schools. The Task Force believes that the GeSCI represents an exciting new approach to using ICTs as a tool for supporting education goals in developing countries.
Ireland's leadership role in this initiative through the UN ICT Task Force and the likely location of the GeSCI secretariat in Dublin provides an important opportunity to support the use of ICTs in a key development area.The Task Force believes that DCI should strongly support this initiative, including through the provision of funding.

3.8 In recent years DCI has, in line with recommendations from the OECD Development Assistance Committee, focussed its development funding channelled through international organisations on a small number of key UN partners. These include the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), UNAIDS and the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). DCI has also strengthened its relations with the World Bank.

UN Reform

3.9 Ireland has been a strong and consistent supporter of UN reform. We have recognised that if the UN is to retain the confidence of its members in its capacity to deal with major international economic and social issues, it must operate effectively and efficiently. Over the past decade, and particularly under the leadership of Kofi Annan, the UN has implemented far reaching reforms in its Funds, Programmes and specialised agencies.

3.10 Many UN agencies and the World Bank are now significantly engaged in issues relating to ICTs and development. The issue is one of UNDP's core areas of business. The World Bank is a global leader in its development of approaches to harnessing ICT for development. Other agencies, such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), have developed expertise in the area of e-commerce. The ITU has programmes to help developing countries members cope with the complex issues of regulatory reform.

3.11 While a deep engagement by the UN system in the global effort to overcome the digital divide is welcome, there is also a risk that the multitude of activities now underway will result in fragmentation, duplication and overlap.

3.12 The Task Force believes that at the international level DCI should, in line with its overall commitment to an effective UN, work for greater coherence and coordination among UN agencies in their ICT related activities. It is also essential that the UN responds to country driven demands and does not seek to impose ICT projects on developing countries.

3.13 The most effective approach to ensuring a common UN vision to the delivery of ICT related development assistance is through the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF), the country level work programmes of the funds and programmes which are based on a common country assessment. DCI should through its participation in the executive boards of the funds and programmes, and through its interaction with UN agencies at the country level, work to ensure that ICT and development issues are dealt with through the UNDAFs. This approach would be within the context of DCI's ongoing efforts to ensure that the UNDAF process is based on and aligned with in-country policy processes such as the PRSPs.
There is also a role for the UN ICT Task Force in ensuring that the UN deals with the ICT challenge in developing countries in a coordinated and coherent way. DCI should support our representative on the Task Force in developing the UN ICT Task Force's approach to this issue.

3.15 DCI concentrates its multilateral funding on the UN funds, programmes and specialised agencies which are most closely focussed on the poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Most of DCI's multilateral funding is unearmarked and goes directly to the core resources of the agencies. This is in line with UN reform and the expressed needs of the agencies.

UNDP

3.16 Of the multilateral organisations involved in ICT and development, the UN Development Programme and the World Bank are the most far advanced and have the most experience. As it deepens its involvement with ICT and development, DCI should work more closely with UNDP and the Bank. At both the multilateral and the bilateral levels, DCI should explore how it might work more closely with UNDP in this area, including

through the provision of Irish expertise drawn from the private sector. UNDP's particular focus in capacity building for ICTs is at the national level.   It has played an important role in Ethiopia and Mozambique in supporting the preparation of ambitious new national ICT strategies.

> **Recommendation**: DCI should identify with UNDP and the respective Governments in Ethiopia and Mozambique, which are two of its programme countries, how best to support the implementation of these national strategies, with a particular focus on capacity building including through the use of Irish ICT volunteers.

UN ICT Task Force

3.17 The United Nations ICT Task Force was established in the autumn of 2001 with a brief to lend a truly global dimension to the multitude of efforts to bridge the global digital divide, foster digital opportunity and thus firmly put ICT at the service of development for all. DCI works closely with our national representative on the UN Task Force.   The UN Task Force has adopted a Plan of Action, which emphasises that its goal is adding value to both existing and new facilities by supporting coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders.

3.18 The UN ICT Task Force has five working groups. Two of these working groups, chaired by Ireland and Sweden have developed a joint proposal to look at the feasibility of establishing an initiative based on the use of ICT in education, the Global eSchools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI).(see Box at 3.7 above)

World Bank

3.19 The World Bank group is very active in the area of global knowledge management and the promotion of IT in development. With its resource base and interest the Bank is widely regarded as a leader in the area of ICT and development. It has significant experiences in a wide range of activities in the use of ICT for development including: the Digital Gateway, infoDev, the Global Development Learning Network as well as participation in the UN ICT Task Force and the G8 Dot Force.

3.20 The Development Learning Centres are part of a world wide Global Development Learning Network which is a division of the World Bank Institute. There are presently 53 Centres world wide - 8 in Africa with another 4 coming on stream in the very near future. The centre in Tanzania is based in the Institute of Finance Management, in Uganda in the Uganda Management Institute and in Ghana the Centre is located at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration. Members of the Task Force travelled to Washington and Kampala to inter alia study the GDLN and saw significant potential for future cooperation between the network and DCI in the context of the new ICT strategy.

> **Recommendation:** DCI should explore the possibility of supporting the Global Development Learning Network (GDLN). The GDLN could also provide a potential opportunity for linking interested Irish institutions with World Bank managed distance learning programmes.

3.21 On a broader level, DCI should cooperate with the World Bank Institute in a new project designed to harness the development lessons to be learned from those countries, including Ireland, who are seen to be leading knowledge economies. This issue is dealt with in more detail in the next Chapter.

3.22 The World Bank manages the Information for Development Programme (Infodev) with the objective of addressing the obstacles facing developing countries in an information-driven world economy. It is a global grant programme to promote innovative projects on the use of ICTs for economic and social development, with a special emphasis on the needs of the poor in developing countries.

3.23 The Infodev programme has focussed in particular on issues such as an enabling telecommunications environment and support for the development of a private ICT sector. The Task Force believes that a deeper engagement, including focused funding related to DCI's programme countries, with Infodev, would give DCI access to a great deal of relevant high quality expertise on ICT and development issues which would be of relevance to the bilateral programme.

UN Volunteers

3.24 Both DCI and APSO have been long term supporters of UN Volunteers, the UN body which provides development volunteers, including Irish volunteers, to other UN agencies and to Governments. In 2000, the UN Secretary General launched UNITeS, the UN InformationTechnology Service, which provides ICT volunteers to help bridge the digital divide.

3.25 DCI provides UNV with core unearmarked funding (2003:€750,000),

while APSO provides funding (2003:€350,000) for specific volunteer initiatives. Against the background of the Government's decision to merge APSO into DCI, the Task Force believes that there is considerable scope to rationalise and focus DCI's overall funding in support of UNV. This rationalisation should result in UNV's UNITeS programme becoming a key area of DCI's support for UNV. UNITeS also provides an important link between the global effort to use volunteers to bridge the digital divide and the domestic ICT private sector in Ireland where a significant number of potential ICT volunteers are available.

3.26 DCI and APSO should jointly develop a new strategy in support of UNV and UNITeS which includes provision for the supply of ICT volunteers from the Irish private sector in support of ICT programmes in developing countries identified by UNITeS.

Coherence

3.27 DCI together with the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, the Departments of the Taoiseach (responsible for the Information Society) and Enterprise, Trade and Employment should establish a regular system of coordination for the preparation of our national policy on ICT issues in multilateral fora. Such coordination could build on the inter-Departmental preparations for the WSIS. It should develop a coordinated and integrated approach to ICT issues arising in the WSIS, the ITU and should also advise our national representative on the UN ICT Task Force. Inter-departmental coordination should also discuss possible funding from DCI to multilateral ICT initiatives, including those managed by the World Bank and the UN Development Programme.

3.28 The Task Force strongly believes that inter-departmental coordination should result in a more coherent national approach in international fora which embraces both the development dimension and our national strengths in ICT. We should build on our high reputation in the UN, and with developing countries, into a strong leadership role which complements our global reputation as a country which has a strong ICT sector. In this regard, the Task Force recognised the important role Ireland is playing on the UN ICT Task Force where we are now associated with the development and promotion of new global initiatives on ICT.

The ePol-NET, an initiative of the G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force designed to marshal global efforts in support of national e-strategies for development, provides an important opportunity for policy coherence between departments. The ePol-NET will establish a focal point for bringing together providers of e-strategy information and expertise for the benefit of individuals, organisations and governments. The Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR) is a founding member of the ePol-NET. The Dublin based Media Lab Europe will host the ePol-NET secretariat and the Global Knowledge and Expertise Portal, which will bring experts in developed countries in contact with their counter-parts in developing countries to share experience and advice. DCI should work closely with the Department of the Marine, Communications and Natural resources in the development of ePol-Net.

EU and ICTs

3.29 The EU is one of the main external sources of funding for ICT-related programmes in developing countries. The EU funds extensive ICT-related programmes in Latin America, Africa and Asia as well as in the poorer Caribbean and Pacific countries and in the Mediterranean region. In Latin America, the EU €63.5 million operation Alliance for the Information Society aims at creating a long-term partnership between the EU and the region. Under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, EU funds for ICT-related projects in Africa will total over €100 million. Phase two of the EU's EU-Asia ICT programme has a budget of €13 millon.

Recommendation: Ireland must seek ways to develop a more coherent national approach in international fora which embraces both the development dimension and our national strengths in ICT.

Africa and ICTs

3.30 Although African countries have made efforts in recent years to facilitate ICT infrastructure, deployment, rollout and exploitation in a number of areas, Africa still remains the continent with the least capability in ICT and least served by telecommunications and other communications facilities.

3.31 In light of this under development, NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, recognised the urgency for African countries to address the threat posed by the growing digital divide. It identified the need for its member states to put in place and implement ICT initiatives to bridge this divide at four levels, namely:

- bridging the divide between the rural and urban areas within a given country:

- bridging the gap between countries of a given sub-region,

- bridging the inter-regional gap and

- briding the gap between Africa and the rest of the world.

3.32 To address these challenges, NEPAD proposed a strategy based on three broad programmatic areas of implementation in the short-term, these were: ICT Infrastructure Development and Rollout Projects; ICT Infrastructure Development and Rollout Facilitation Projects; and ICT Infrastructure Exploitation and Utilization Initiatives. The plan further identified a number of projects and initiatives under each of these three broad programme areas to bring the strategy forward.
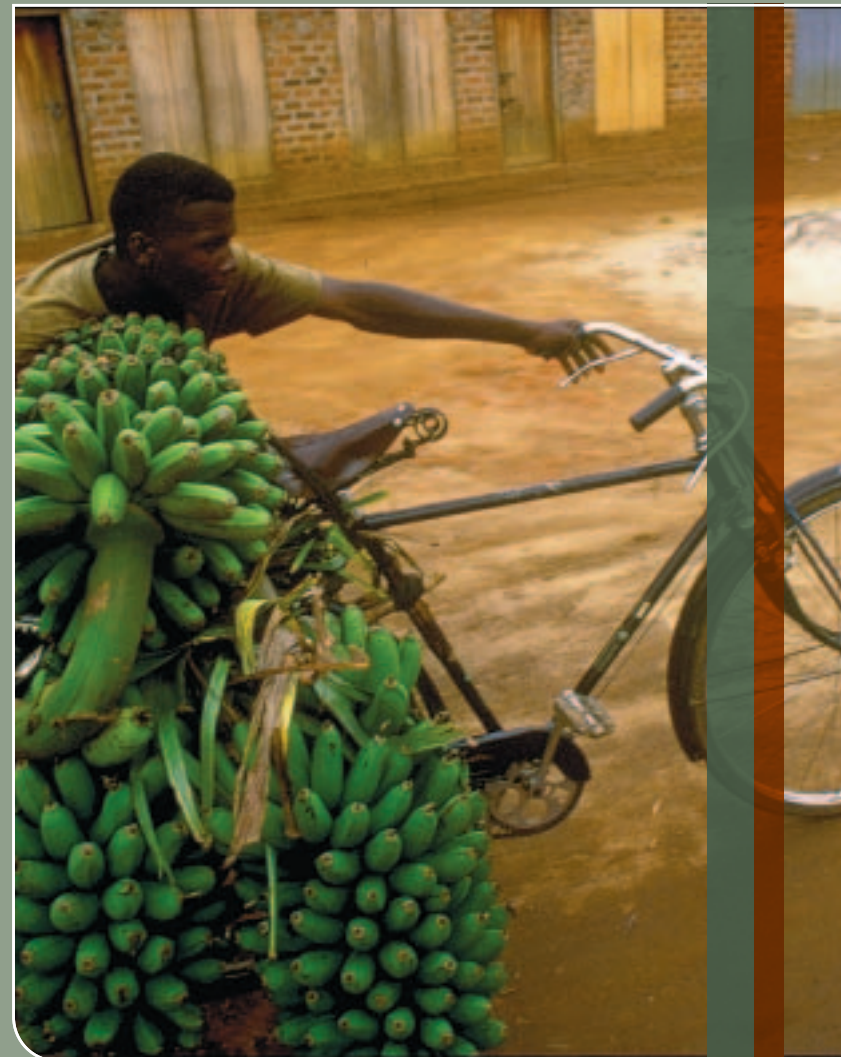
Chapter 4:
The Domestic Dimension

Ireland's Development Experience

4.1 Ireland has a very positive international reputation as a country that has moved in a very short time from an economy based largely on agriculture and low technology exports to become one of the most globalised economies in the world. We have attracted many of the biggest names in the IT industry and also seen the growth of a vibrant domestic IT sector. Ireland is now one of the largest exporters of IT hardware and software in the world.

4.2 As Development Cooperation Ireland moves to integrate ICTs into its development programmes, it has the advantage of having a high concentration of IT companies and expertise available domestically from which it would hope to draw advice, inspiration and support.

4.3 Many developing countries have sought to understand the critical success factors in Ireland's recent economic development, particularly the role that ICTs played in our economy – from the use of ICTs by Government, public bodies and industry generally to the role of foreign direct investment in the economy, including the economic environment in which this occurred.

4.4 Ireland's progress towards an economy which uses ICTs to promote economic and social development means that we have a significant pool of technology, programme and change management skills and experience of managing complex ICT projects. Our partners in developing countries are, at the same time, in the process of developing strategies to help them overcome the development challenges they are facing and identifying where and how ICTs can help them in this process.

4.5 At present, there is no single mechanism within Government for responding to the many requests received by Ireland from developing countries for information on Ireland's development experience, particularly in the IT sector. The Task Force strongly believes that Development Cooperation Ireland, together with Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, has an important role to play in developing an outreach programme for developing countries. Such a programme would provide a tailor made response to requests from developing country partners for an introduction to the policies and programmes underpinning Ireland's rapid development over the past decade.

Recommendation: DCI, using Ireland's experience in providing a road map to a knowledge economy, should form a steering group with Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Communication, Marine and Natural Resources to establish a modular programme to respond to developing country interest in Ireland's recent economic and social progress including the contribution of ICTs to our national development.

As a first step, DCI should respond positively towards the interest of the World Bank Institute (WBI) in developing a partnership with Ireland on a project designed to identify the lessons learned from Ireland's progress from a predominantly agricultural based economy to a knowledge based economy.

This partnership would include the convening by DCI and the World Bank Institute of a conference in Dublin, in the second half of 2004, to which interested developing countries would be invited. The conference would look in depth at the lessons learned from Ireland's transformation into a knowledge based economy.

The agreement between DCI with WBI might also include the secondment of Irish experts to the World Bank Institute to take forward partnerships between Ireland and specific developing countries on the knowledge economy. These partnerships should take the Government's regional strategies into account.

The partnership between DCI and the WBI would build on the interest in Ireland prompted by the Taoiseach's address to the World Bank in March 2003 and would be closely coordinated with the World Bank's own knowledge economy schedule of events.

Ireland's international reputation as a country which has benefited greatly from ICTs, and the international recognition of the quality of our programme of development cooperation should be mutually reinforcing. Through our programme of development cooperation we should reach out to countries who are interested in the Irish experience and who want to come into contact with the Government agencies, the private companies and individual entrepreneurs who have contributed to our national economic development.

Working with the Private Sector

4.6 The Task Force recognises that the issue of DCI's overall relationship with the Irish private sector in the wider context of DCI's programme goes beyond its terms of reference. We welcome Minister of State Kitt's announced intention to establish a Private Sector Forum. This will facilitate future dialogue and partnership between Development Cooperation Ireland and the private sector, including the ICT sector. The Forum can be used to take forward recommendations relating to the ICT private sector and DCI made in this report.

4.7 The importance of a strong relationship between DCI and the ICT private sector in Ireland has been one of the most consistent themes arising in our discussions. The Task Force had the benefit of the personal involvement of two of its members, involved in the private sector, who were engaged in ICT projects in developing countries.

4.8 While noting that DCI's programme is and should remain untied, the Task Force believes that there is scope for a strong partnership with ICT companies. As DCI moves to use ICTs as a tool to support its objective of poverty reduction, it must draw on the pool of expertise available domestically. A closer relationship with the ICT private sector would supply DCI with advice and support that it does not otherwise have within the programme. It would also provide the private sector with a perspective on the particular ICT challenges facing developing countries.

4.9   In this context, the Task Force noted that Ireland, because of the untied nature of its aid, and the high reputation its programme of development cooperation enjoys in developing countries, is particularly well placed to offer advice and assistance to partner Governments and individual companies. The Task Force believe, therefore, that there is a role for DCI in fostering relationships, partnerships and exchanges of experience between interested companies in DCI's seven programme countries with Irish ICT companies. Such relationships might involve a mentoring role for the Irish company.

4.10   In bringing Irish and developing country companies together, DCI's role should be to act as a facilitator. In time this activity should be a component of a wider private sector support strategy which is being elaborated by DCI. The role of the Irish company could be to offer managerial advice, technology transfer and marketing support to developing country partners.

> Recommendation: The Task Force believes that DCI should develop a strong relationship with the ICT private sector in Ireland. The Private Sector Forum, announced by Minister Kitt, should be the appropriate vehicle for deepening the relationship.
>
> Within DCI's untied aid budget, there is scope for DCI to harness the pool of private sector ICT expertise in Ireland. Together with Enterprise Ireland DCI should work to make Ireland's ICT private sector expertise available to interested companies and Governments in its programme countries.

> Ireland's embassies in the programme countries should be asked to help identify local private sector ICT companies, or government departments or agencies, who would wish to enter into a dialogue with the Irish ICT private sector.
>
> DCI should facilitate the development of a register of interested Irish private sector companies who are willing to enter into such partnerships. Enterprise Ireland provide appropriate support where commercial opportunities exist for Irish companies. The Irish company might be asked to take on a mentoring role, including the supply of managerial and technical advice, to its developing country partner.
>
> As part of this strategy, DCI and our embassies in the programme countries should also facilitate the organisation of a round table of interested parties, in country scenario planning and exchange visits.

4.11   The Task Force was impressed by DCI's strong focus on poverty reduction and the quality of its country programmes. During its visits to programmes in the field, Task Force members gained a strong understanding of DCI's commitment to partnership.

4.12   The Task Force believes that in the complex and difficult task of preparing Country Strategy Papers (CSPs), which govern DCI's development activities in the programme countries over a three year time-span, DCI should, where appropriate, seek to involve the Irish ICT sector. The CSPs, which are elaborated in consultation with the Government and civil society of the

developing country partner, are prepared by a multi-disciplinary group of DCI specialists with a strong input from the local Embassy. The work of this group would be greatly enriched by a private sector perspective.

Recommendation: The integration of ICTs in to DCI programmes should support DCI's approach to poverty reduction, based on partnership and the support of country owned development strategies.

In this context, the Task Force identified the importance of the preparatory process for Country Strategy papers, the basis for all of DCI's multiannual development cooperation programmes in the field.

Include a representative from the private sector on the DCI teams that develop Country Strategy Papers. Such a private sector representative could meet with Government Departments involved in ICT, private sector organisations and companies. The private sector representative could assist in preparing strategies and programmes to respond to the expressed needs of the developing country partner. The representative could facilitate the organisation of ICT workshops and in country scenario planning to feed ICT needs into the CSPs .

The inclusion of an ICT private sector perspective into the preparation of CSPs would be an innovation and would help to strengthen DCIs partnership with the ICT private sector.

Volunteerism and the ICT Private Sector

4.13 In its contacts with the private sector, the Task Force was impressed by the interest among many in management and employees in contributing their skills, on a voluntary basis, to help developing countries to obtain maximum advantage of ICTs.

4.14 This strong commitment among many in the ICT private sector arises from a passionate belief in the power of these technologies to change lives for the better. There is a strong realisation among ICT private sector employees that Ireland, and other developed economies, have gained much from the ICT revolution. Many ICT staff would relish the challenge of responding to the needs of poor developing countries, and of spreading ICTs in countries where new approaches and new solutions will be required.

4.15 The motivation of some private sector companies' to become involved in development also arises from a desire to keep key staff who might otherwise leave to work in the voluntary sector for a period and are ultimately lost to the company. These private sector companies want to find ways of allowing their staff to work in the voluntary sector, while ensuring that they return enriched with new experiences and with a new motivation.

4.16 One of the advantages of seeking volunteers in the ICT sector is that, given the nature of the media involved, some volunteers could make their contribution without the need to travel. Examples of this on-line volunteerism and long-distance cooperation include providing translations, medical diagnosis expertise, managing website pages or moderating electronic fora.

4.17 The Report of the Ireland Aid Review Committee recognised that the development cooperation practice has changed radically in recent years. The emphasis is now on building local capacity rather than employing expatriate technical assistants.
In mobilising the highly skilled and motivated pool of people in Ireland that wish to become involved in voluntary service, DCI and voluntary organisations must work to ensure that the volunteers operate in partnership with the developing country Government to build capacity through, for example, training in-country.

4.19 This strong private sector interest in voluntary service must be seen against the background of the integration of the Agency for Personal Service Overseas (APSO) into Development Cooperation Ireland on foot of the recommendation in the Report of the Ireland Aid Review Committee.

4.20 Minister of State Kitt has informed the Task Force of his intention to use the APSO integration process to update and modernise the concept of volunteerism in Ireland. He has initiated work on a new initiative in this area the details of which will be announced later in the year.

4.21 The Task Force strongly welcomed the Minister's intention to place a renewed emphasis on volunteerism and to update the concept to meet the new demands of the DCI programme and its developing country partners.

> Recommendation: The Task Force believes that DCI should facilitate, through the building of partnerships with the private sector and southern partners, the interest in voluntary service in the Irish ICT private sector. The integration of APSO into DCI, and the new initiative on volunteerism undertaken by Minister of State, Tom Kitt, provide an opportunity to take this forward.

> The Task Force would like to see the development of a national ICT register of volunteers ("an ICT volunteer corps") willing to offer their services to developing countries. Such a register could be held by the successor to APSO in DCI and actively managed in cooperation with the ICT industry.
>
> The register could be used to provide ICT specialists in response to developing country demands for support in responding to challenges such as the implementation of ICT strategies, the introduction of e-Government, technical problems with infrastructure and connectivity and the development of indigenous ICT industries.
>
> In addition, DCI should offer support and advice to new initiatives in the ICT private sector. DCI should act as a facilitator of voluntary service in the private sector, rather than assuming roles and responsibilities which are the prerogative of voluntary organisations. DCI can offer initial finance to get new voluntary initiatives off the ground, offer advice on health and security in developing countries, assist in the identification of opportunities for voluntary service and help in the assessment of demands from developing countries for volunteers.
>
> As indicated in chapter 3, DCI should develop a new strategy for funding UN Volunteers focussed on its UN Information Technology Service (UNITeS)

Ireland's NGOs and ICTs

4.22 During its discussions, the Task Force recognised that many of Ireland's NGOs involved in development work are also considering how to use ICTs in their activities. In using ICTs to achieve its development objectives, DCI should work closely with NGOs.

4.23 The issue of ICTs and development is new for both DCI and NGOs and each should learn from the other. It will be important to facilitate a dialogue, to exchange experiences and to explore areas for possible joint ventures, possibly together with private sector partnerships.

4.24 The spirit of volunteerism in the ICT private sector is also of relevance to Ireland's development NGOs. DCI and the NGOs should work closely together in seeking to make best use of ICT volunteers in their respective programmes and in cooperation with host country Governments.

Recommendation: The DCI-NGO Forum, established on foot of a recommendation in the Ireland Aid Review Committee Report might wish to consider how cooperation between DCI and the NGOs in the use of ICTs should be strengthened and promoted.

The Task Force believes that the use of ICTs in development cooperation should be integrated into the DCI funding schemes used to support NGOs. For example, the Task Force suggest that ICT and development should be a key component of DCI's funding relationship with the NGOs under the Multiannual Funding programmes (MAPs) and the special fund for NGO HIV/AIDS activities (HAPs).

In integrating ICT issues into its dialogue with NGOs under these funding schemes, DCI and the NGOs should consider including the ICT private sector in the discussions.

In time, the Task Force recommends that DCI and the NGOs should develop joint DCI/NGO/private sector programmes with each side bringing funding and/or specialist advice and resources with a focus on the programmes' merits, innovation and impact on poor countries.

Research and Development

4.25 In its examination of the potential for ICTs to support development and poverty reduction in developing countries, the Task Force was struck by both the interest of poor countries in these technologies and the relative lack of research into the application of ICTs in low income settings.

4.26 While the potential of ICTs to promote development is widely recognised, less attention has been paid to adapting many of the technologies to operate in countries where electricity supplies may be erratic, where connectivity is difficult and costly, where many of the potential beneficiaries have low levels of education and where there may be little or no content available in local languages.

4.27 There is clearly a need for more applied research in selective areas both by the private sector, and in academic institutions, into how the technologies might best be adapted to local circumstances. Donors need to continue to keep informed of technological developments that may be of potential use in ICT programmes. Developing country Governments need to know about best practice in implementing ICT strategies. All of this calls for focussed research and development.

> **Recommendation:** There should be a greater focus on the importance of applied research and development to the application of ICTs in support of poverty reduction in poor countries. There is a potential role for Ireland in this area given the strong concentration of ICT expertise, including in the research area, available in Ireland.
>
> The Advisory Board to DCI, which has a budget to facilitate research into issues of interest to the DCI programme, should be asked to consider engaging in a dialogue with relevant institutions in Ireland about research activities related to the application of ICTs in poor countries.
>
> The dialogue should seek to identify what role, if any, DCI, the Advisory Board to DCI and the private sector might be able to play in the development of policy and technical solutions to many of the difficult issues related to the use of ICTs in poor developing countries. The dialogue should include bodies such as Media Lab Europe as well as third level institutes and private sector research centres.

The use of ICTs in DCI's programmes

4.28 Within an organisation such as DCI, the management and organisation of knowledge has a crucial bearing on performance. DCI staff , particularly in the field, need to have easy access to information on best practice, comparable projects and external research, to make informed decisions on the delivery of high quality development programmes. It appears that DCI has very basic ICT access itself and has not seen the full value of ICT in its own management and operations. It appears to be at a greater handicap than most other government departments given the location of embassies and its engagement with international organisations and the need for a high speed, secure and networked exchange of information. In this regard an updated ICT structure is required for DCI based on a current technical evaluation with committed timelines for delivery and agreed budgets.

4.29 The rapid growth of the DCI programme has created real challenges for the organisation in terms of its internal sharing of information, learning, experience and project evaluation. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has highlighted DCI's high dependence on a small number of key individuals because of poor internal, knowledge sharing. By and large up to now knowledge within DCI has been retained by individuals and individual groups, this must now be leveraged as a broader organisational asset. In the coming years, as the programme continues to grow the sharing and retention of both explicit and tacit knowledge will be critical to the continued delivery of a high quality programme.

4.30 In this context DCI needs to improve on its existing knowledge management systems, in terms of ICT tools and more importantly the

development of a more coherent organisational approach to knowledge and learning. The organisation must move beyond a model that concentrates knowledge around a few decision makers.

4.31 The use of ICT in an organisation such as DCI is an absolute imperative. Education and learning need to be at the centre of any organisation promoting development and should be identified as a discrete function with the status of a separate section within DCI headed by an education/information specialist reporting directly to the Director General thus ensuring that its own ICT strategy is complementary to the education and learning objectives of the division.

4.32 The launch earlier this year of a new online resource centre was long overdue. The new centre, separate from the Department's website, will in time become a crucial resource for providing both specialist and general information about the programme to a much greater number of people.

Recommendations: DCI should move quickly to establish a Knowledge Management working group to thoroughly identify the organisation's knowledge management needs and to examine best practice in other donor agencies, government departments and the private sector.

The current website will need to be continually refined and improved. It should in time become the central public access point for the programme.

A three year operational and infrastructure ICT plan is required for DCI based on a current technical evaluation with committed timelines for delivery and agreed budgets.

Future Funding

4.33 In its work, the Task Force has been conscious that decisions on funding levels for DCI programmes are the prerogative of the Minister. DCI has sophisticated internal programme appraisal mechanisms to assess the quality of proposals submitted by embassies in its partner countries. The DCI Programme Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), which includes a large number of external development specialists, plays a key role in ensuring that the overall quality of the programme is maintained through a rigorous assessment of funding proposals.

4.34 Bearing the above in mind, the Task Force believes that the effective implementation of the ICT strategy, and the future use of ICTs as a powerful tool in support of poverty reduction, will require an increase in DCI's overall funding into ICT related programmes. Such funding would continue to be largely channelled through the bilateral programme in support of country owned developed programmes.

4.35 The Task Force believes that the successful implementation of the ICT and Development Strategy needs to be underpinned by a specific budget line in DCI's annual funding vote from Central Government. The point was made that innovation within any organisation needs a "push" from a dedicated funding line if it is to be successfully integrated across the organisation. For this reason, the Task Force recommends that the Minister establish a specific ICT for Development budget line within DCI's annual budget of €10-€15m over the three years 2004-2006 based on new and existing ICT related spending across the programme. The level of funding should be subject to ongoing review based on demand, success and available resources.

The Task Force also recommended that this budget line be supported by

advice and resources from a committee appointed by the Minister. This committee would include representatives from the private sector, DCI and NGOs and be chaired by a person with appropriate expertise in ICT and development. Its specific mandate should be to:

(i) Advise DCI in assessing programme proposals for ICT and Development in the bilateral and multilateral areas;

(ii) Pursue synergies and partnerships between DCI and the private sector in harnessing ICT for development, including the possibility of an ICT Incubation Fund to promote innovation and boost prestige

(iii) Monitor the implementation of the strategy and associated funding.

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- Mr Colm Butler, Principal Officer, Department of the Taoiseach

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- Mr Peter Coyle, Enterprise Ireland

- Ms Irene Doyle, Enterprise Ireland

- Mr Mahmoud Daud, ActionAid

- Mr Peter Heather, ActionAid

- Mr Billy Glennon, Vision Consulting

- Mr Mike Greally, APSO

- Mr Chris Horn, Iona Technology (resigned 19 May 2003)

- Ms Karina Howley, Intel

- Mr John Lahart, Political Adviser to Minister of State Kitt

- Ms Sadhbh McCarthy

- Mr Paddy Maguinness, Concern International

- Mr Niall Mellon, Niall Mellon Group

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