

Catalyzing the Creation and Exchange of Local Content: CCELC Uganda

{Call for applications}

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that there is need to build capacity in developing countries to enable people to generate and disseminate content. Content about, and relevant for, local communities to facilitate the local expression and local application of information (*see for example: 'Collecting and Propagating Local Development Content', Peter Ballantyne, International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), May 2002*).

The process of production, storage and dissemination of local knowledge can be facilitated by the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs). ICTs are tools that, together with other development activities, can contribute to sustainable development and poverty alleviation via the generation and exchange of timely and appropriate information. ICTs can also empower local communities by amplifying their voices. They are 'enabling' tools that can help local communities capitalize on emerging opportunities, especially in education and income generation.

Most content initiatives using ICTs tend to 'push' external content towards local people. That is, they mainly provide 'access' to other people's knowledge. With a few exceptions, new technologies are not used to strengthen the 'push' of local content from local people.

ICTs can only be instrumental in the process of production, storage and dissemination of local knowledge if the capacities are in place to make effective use of these new technologies. This is the basis of the "Catalyzing the creation and exchange of local content" (CCELC) project. The goal of CCELC is to strengthen the abilities of local communities and organizations in developing countries to create, synthesis, adapt, and exchange valuable, and potentially wealth-generating local content, including appropriate knowledge from elsewhere. CCELC is funded by DFID and the Canadian Government.

In Uganda, the CCELC program is managed by I-Network Uganda. Launched in 2001, with the support of the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), I-Network is an association of individuals or organizations rallied around the theme ICT for Development. I-Network core objective is knowledge sharing of ICT development experiences.

Under the CCELC program, I-Network and IICD announce a small grants fund (CCELC-SGF) to address issues in the creation and exchange of local content in Uganda. The CCELC-SGF is an amount of 40,000 Euros that will be distributed among 5 projects as non-renewable grants of 8,000 Euros each. At the end of the year (12 month period), a dissemination workshop will be held at which results from the 5 projects will be showcased.

The aim of the CCELC small grants fund (CCELC-SGF) is to support innovative activity that contributes to the understanding and application of ICTs in the creation and exchange of local content in Uganda. This competitive fund provides an opportunity for local communities to strengthen work on ICTs in local content creation and exchange for sustainable development.

2. What is local content?

A definition of “local content” is difficult to find. To some, local content is content for people in a certain area, or content for people speaking a given language, or for people from a cultural tradition. For others, local content is that which is relevant to, or consumed by a given society or community.

For this program, we shall use the definition “local content is the expression of the locally owned and adapted knowledge of a community – where the community is defined by its location, culture, language, or area of interest”¹.

This means that local content is not something that is broadcast to or necessarily used by members of a defined community, although this is not excluded. It includes any external or global content that has been transformed, adapted and assimilated into the knowledge base of the community. Local content is exchanged and shared, locally or globally, in various formats, packages and media. When it is disseminated and is accessible using digital means, it can be termed E-Content.

3. What are ICTs?

The widely used acronym 'ICTs' encompasses a multitude of equipment, software and services, ranging from satellite communication systems, telephone booths in rural areas, digital radio programs, the Internet and electronic databases, to e-commerce services via the World Wide Web. ICTs can be interpreted broadly as technologies that facilitate communication and the processing and transmission of information by electronic means. This definition encompasses the full range of ICTs, from radio and television to telephones (fixed and mobile), computers and the Internet.

In development contexts, the interface with traditional communications systems and tools is also important, as are applications in areas like agriculture, business, governance, health, and education. In fact, in many cases, the “new” ICTs are tape recorders, radio, television, newspapers, or telephones.

4. Guidelines for CCELC-SGF projects

In general, projects should not assume that the absence of visible local content in digital forms is a problem. Neither should they assume that local content always needs to be shared beyond its community of origin, nor that digital media is always the most appropriate solution.

CCELC-SGF projects could address any of the following issues²:

¹ : ‘Collecting and Propagating Local Development Content’, Peter Ballantyne, International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), May 2002

² Based on recommendations made in ‘Collecting and Propagating Local Development Content’

- *Valuing local content:* Many individuals and communities are unaware that their knowledge is valuable and useful – for themselves and for others. Awareness of the value of local content, in whatever format, needs to be created.
- *Motivating local content:* Content does not flow on its own. Even where people have the needed skills, and where technologies and finance are in place, the right incentives are necessary to make it flow.
- *Making local content visible:* Most local content is “invisible”, especially to decision-makers at national level and to international audiences with only digital connections. Making content visible needs to begin at the local level.
- *Addressing language issues:* Local content (and global content) is defined by its linguistic and cultural contexts. Language is also the catalyst that allows people to share and to understand. Local adaptations to cope with local languages are critical for ICT development and for ICT applications. For example, oral and visual content have been presented in Luganda and in a local setting on the CD-Rom “Rural Women in Africa: Ideas for Earning Money”³.
- *Connecting with tradition:* The traditional knowledge of local people is often unvalued and untapped. There is need to ensure that indigenous and traditional knowledge is not sidelined or lost, nor that it is exploited without due recognition to the local owners. In addition, many communities depend on “traditional communication processes”, such as drama, story telling and singing, to express their knowledge. Attempts to disseminate and share local content should blend and should take into account existing communication processes.
- *Building adaptation skills:* There is a huge amount of external or global content that Uganda can draw on. A major local challenge is to download essential global knowledge and to make it useable and practical at the local level.
- *Promoting local ownership and participation:* The way in which content is created and exchanged is as important as the content itself. Participatory development techniques can be tapped and applied in local content development.
- *Engaging in joint action:* The process of content creation and exchange is beyond the capacity of individuals and organizations on their own. Partnerships, collaboration and the strengthening of local organizations or groups is the foundation for much more dynamic local content environments.
- *Strengthening the local skills base:* The development of local capacities is a major challenge, the needs varying from community to community. Learning-by-doing is a way to build up a core reservoir of talent and entrepreneurship within communities.

Some of the criteria that will be used in selecting the five CCELC-SGF projects are:

³ “Rural Women in Africa: Ideas for earning money”, available online at <http://www.wougnet.org/News/cdupdate.html>

Initiative and ownership: Local communities are the main drivers behind the project and are the owner of the project and its results.

Local content: the project has to catalyze the production of knowledge that is appropriate to the community level and is the local expression of locally owned and adapted knowledge of a community.

ICT: The project has to support people in the communities in using ICTs to facilitate the creation and exchange of local knowledge.

Outputs: The project must result in knowledge products that can be shared widely. The products can be available in a variety of formats including print, CD-rom, and the web.

Critical mass: The project has to assemble sufficient actors around a common subject to allow for dissemination. A minimum of three communities/groups per project with a minimum of 10 activities (cultural events, work of opinion leaders, meetings, writings of local actors, etc.) would be required.

Sector focus: There is a preference to have projects dealing with one of the priorities of IICD's Uganda Country programme: Health, Livelihood, Education, and Good Governance.

5. CCELC-SGF Application Process

The CCELC-SGF application process involves completion of the attached application form which should be submitted to:

CCELC-SGF Program Coordinator

I-Network Uganda

P.O. Box 26970

Kampala, Uganda

Fax: (041) 343005

Email: aitec.uganda@infocom.co.ug

The deadline for submitting applications is August/11/2004 and grant winners will be announced on September/10/2004.

For more information about the CCELC Uganda program, contact: 041-251632 / 041-256832

For information about I-Network, visit <http://www.i-network.or.ug>, and for information about IICD visit <http://www.iicd.org>

CCELC-SGF Application Form

(The completed application should not exceed four pages)

Part I: About you and your organization

1. Name

2. Organization

3. Address

Part II: Describe the project you propose for local content creation and exchange using ICTs

4. Title of the proposed project

5. Describe the problem/issue and why it is urgent

6. Identify the major activities of the proposed project. Indicate the expected date of completion for each activity and describe how a one-time small grant of 8,000 Euros would be used.

7. Describe who is expected to benefit as a result of this project. Explain the intended impact of the project.