

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the **Evaluation Study**, undertaken during first quarter of 2009 by the **GreenTech Consultants (Pvt) Ltd** for **ICTA**, of the **e-Society Development Initiative (e-SDI)** presently being implemented under **e-Sri Lanka Development Project..**

The **overall objective** of the assignment is to evaluate the achievement of expected outputs and outcomes of the e-SDI; both as a fund and as a program and at project level.

The **study methodology** included an identification of a comprehensive set of “results” indicators – output, outcome and impact indicators – to guide data collection and survey of samples of projects funded under the **Community Assistance Programme (CAP)** and the **Partnership Assistance Programme (PAP)** of e-SDI. Altogether 50 CAP projects and 10 PAP projects were surveyed by conducting at each project site (i) survey of up to 5 project staff (using face-to-face interviews), (ii) survey of 12 beneficiaries (using face-to-face interviews) and (iii) focus group discussion with project staff and beneficiaries.

With the elapse of 85 percent of the project implementation period by 15 March 2009, the ICTA has been successful in making operational 136 CAP Projects and 35 PAP Projects. Compared with the appraisal targets, these amount to achievement of 97 percent and 117 percent, respectively. The expected **Thematic Areas** under CAP and PAP are being satisfactorily covered.

The **geographical distribution of agreement signed projects** indicates that 85 percent of them are located in Eastern, North Central, North Western, Uva, Sabaragamuwa and Southern Provinces. Thus, majority of the projects are serving districts predominantly with rural areas. The number of projects from Northern Province is very low due to prolonged civil disturbances.

Towards accomplishment of these achievements, ICTA has undertaken province-wise as well as island-wide Print and Electronic Media Publicity Campaign, Awareness Meetings Programme and Capacity Building Programmes. Most recently, ICTA has successfully launched the **Replication Assistance Programme (RAP)** with the aim of taking the successful initiatives resulted from CAP and PAP Projects beyond the communities in which they were piloted.

The **review of operations of e-SDI** indicates the following:

- (i) The transparency in the operations of the e-SDI has been achieved in several ways;
- (ii) Fair competition has been created by the appropriate mechanisms;
- (iii) The cost of inputs to projects is justified by the degree of achievement of outputs;
- (iv) The e-SDI operates with a bottom up approach by adhering to demand-driven basis;
- (v) The inclusion of marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities and other minorities is satisfactory in projects under both CAP and PAP;
- (vi) The timely submission of Project Progress Monitoring Reports from projects under CAP and PAP are at satisfactory level.
- (vii) The planned versus real strategic areas of focus match expectations
- (viii) The beneficiary types being served match the expectations and include rural school children, school leavers, youth, women, farmers, rural communities, estate communities, and vulnerable groups such as disabled.
- (ix) All the recommendations made in e-SDI Evaluation Study – 2008 have been implemented by ICTA

- (i) The factors leading to the **highly successful CAP projects** include the following: (i) a supportive parent organization; (ii) enthusiastic leadership and dedicated office staff; (iii) regular monitoring and field visits by the service provider or the coordinators; and (iv) need or demand for the specific project outputs and services. The following factors lead to the **least successful CAP projects**: (i) slow generation of funds to continue operation and maintenance (O&M) of the facilities created under the projects; (ii) absence of a strong parent or outside supporting organization for continued financial assistance; (iii) reduced demand for services and/or locating the service centres in inappropriate sites with limited accessibility; and (iv) inability to develop linkages with other relevant organisations.
- (ii) The factors leading to the **highly successful PAP projects** include the following: (i) full utilization of the total funds allocated effectively and efficiently to achieve the project objectives; (ii) embarking on projects as Corporate Social Responsibility of the implementing organization and high commitment and dedication of their staff. (iii) extending the project implementation even beyond the amount of the grant available; (iv) achieving of better and far reaching outcomes even with slight deviations in targeting; (v) adopting a well documentation system of the project results; and (vi) positive responses of the beneficiaries. The following factors lead to the **least successful PAP projects**: (i) major deviations from original objectives and the theme; (ii) non-utilization of total funds allocated to achieve project objectives; (iii) failure to get the services of the project developments into the society; and (iv) inadequate addressing of the issue of sustainability.
- (iii) Innovative projects that can be replicated or scaled up have already been identified as listed in Table 4.3 and **Replication Assistance Programme** launched. The RAP grant is intended to help organisations who wish to replicate selected applications in other communities. Approximately 40 grants are expected to be awarded during the course of the project.

The **reviews of outcomes of interventions at CAP and PAP project level indicate** that, on the overall, the achievements of the results indicators are satisfactory.

It was also concluded that the achievement of PAD Indicators, for both the CAP and PAP projects, on the overall is satisfactory.

On the overall, the following **expected outcomes of e-SDI** are being gradually realised at varying level and capable of full realization as all the projects achieve complete operations:

- increased awareness among rural and urban poor of how ICT may benefit their lives;
- improved community capacity to implement projects and utilize ICT to meet local needs;
- increased economic opportunity and equity through wide use of ICT in agriculture, tourism, health, and education;
- empowerment of women and youth;
- support for peace and environmental management; and
- mobilization of indigenous knowledge.

In addition, a number of outstanding products have resulted from the projects being implemented under CAP and PAP which will benefit different target groups at national level once these are made available under the Replication Assistance Programme.

On the basis of the study findings reported herein, the **overall e-SDI has been assessed as highly relevant, effective, efficient, likely sustainable and expected impacts being realized.** Accordingly, **e-SDI has been rated successful.**

Finally, the following **recommendations** are made aimed at further improving the on-going implementation of the e-SDI and support enhancing the sustainability of the interventions as well as ensuring the benefit flow to a wider population.

Recommendations for the Future Management by ICTA and Process Consultant

1. The role of the service provider has to be streamlined to make the proposed projects effective. It is required to make the project proponents fully aware of the concept of e-SDI and the project should be carefully reviewed with regard to the proposed project objectives, activities and outputs. It is imperative to clearly specify the objectives, milestones with targets and results indicators developed in a participatory manner at the inception and the contract must ensure the timely delivery of tangible outputs.
2. In some of the projects, it was also observed that a demand study and the location of the project have had a significant impact on project success. Therefore, a thorough review of the proposed objectives, activities and deliverables by both the service provider and ICTA is recommended.
3. In selecting projects for grant award, priority or preference should be given to projects supported by active organizations in the community and project owners having experience of previous successful project implementation.
4. It is important to practice record keeping and maintenance of usage data and information on beneficiaries of the project and incorporate this requirement in the contract to ensure compliance.
5. It was also seen that some of the projects have a direct relationship or involvement with one or more public institutions to achieve targeted objectives. Service provider or ICTA should provide assistance or facilitate the project owners to building up these linkages with the existing concerned local institutions.
6. When a historical, anthropological or scientific study is undertaken as the project scope, it is essential that the research is being vetted by the relevant research institute or concerned organization prior to dissemination of the product. It is recommended to incorporate this requirement in the contract to provide credibility and authenticity for the product.
7. ICTA should intervene in stressing the importance of the product of PAP 007 in disaster management, security activities and other activities related to government functions.
8. Make arrangements with relevant authorities for the recognition of the new products. For example, the Sign Language Dictionary produced under PAP 008 need recognition as an authoritative document for use of aurally disabled persons.

9. Establishment of an Advisory Committee to support ICTA to guide and review the implementation of the **Replication Assistance Programme** to guarantee the achievement of best results and in some cases to take to national level (such as the products of Uni-Consultancy (PAP 011). This Committee could include representatives from relevant government agencies and national level institutions.

Recommendations for Project Operators

1. It was also observed that due to inadequate awareness, project beneficiaries have not extended their full commitment and ownership to the project. Therefore, it is recommended to place more emphasis in making the project beneficiaries aware of project concepts, objectives and benefits.
2. It was also seen that some of the projects have a direct relationship or involvement with one or more public institutions to achieve targeted objectives. Service provider or ICTA should provide assistance or facilitate the project owners to building up these linkages with the existing concerned local institutions.
3. It is important to practice record keeping and maintenance of usage data and information on beneficiaries of the project and incorporate this requirement in the contract to ensure compliance.
4. When a historical, anthropological or scientific study is undertaken as the project scope, it is essential that the research is being vetted by the relevant research institute or concerned organization prior to dissemination of the product. It is recommended to incorporate this requirement in the contract to provide credibility and authenticity for the product.
5. Make arrangements with relevant authorities for the recognition of the new products. For example, the Sign Language Dictionary produced under PAP 008 need recognition as an authoritative document for use of aurally disabled persons.

Recommendations for the Future Monitoring & Evaluation

1. In addition to the service providers, Monitoring Unit of ICTA should also allocate its staff to track down the projects and periodically review them against measurable outputs and outcomes. This will help the project proponent to remain focused and achieving targeted results.

