



Distribution: LIMITED

E/ECA/DISD/CODI.3/26

18 April 2003

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Original: English

I.

II. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Third Meeting of the Committee
on Development Information (CODI)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
10 – 17 May 2003

The Information Technology Center for Africa

I. Background

The Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA) is an information and communication technology (ICT) - focused exhibition and learning centre. The concept of ITCA grew out of the need to wrap a framework around the growing number of mandates and ICT related outreach activities spearheaded by ECA. ITCA offers an opportunity to reach the approximately 18,000 conference participants that pass through the ECA's United Nations Conference Center (UNCC) to attend over 1500 events annually. ITCA intends to provide its exhibition and training services both to ECA and non-ECA-sponsored conferences in the framework of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) which was adopted in 1996 by the African Ministers in charge of economic and social development and planning, as well as the Summit of African Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Yaounde (Cameroon) in July 1996. In responding to the AISI framework, ITCA aims to focus on enhancing the awareness and commitment of African policy and decision-makers in assuming leadership and championing the diffusion and utilization of ICTs to development endeavors in Africa. This will open up significant new markets for ICT products and services throughout Africa, even in the medium term, which will further accelerate the continent's socio-economic development and growth. The core services of ITCA are:

1. ITCA's ICT Exhibition component demonstrates a coherent set of attractive, enticing, novel, informative and interactive multi-media exhibits specifically aimed at creating awareness of the major benefits and crucial role of ICT amongst Africa's decision-makers.
2. On-site workshops and seminars will be provided to delegates and other participants to promote awareness on the importance of ICTs to enhance Africa's economic growth and competitiveness. The on-site training centre will also provide training on Internet access, web resources searching, web site development, establishment and management of discussion lists and other aspects of Internet-based communications.

The Distance Learning programme will deliver courses to ECA staff and beneficiaries from member States on subjects of relevance to their career development as well as promote distance-learning activities in Africa.

3. ITCA Outreach Service Center: Website development, information repackaging, dissemination of ICT-related literature and publications, facilitating technology access to member States, and follow-up and assistance to ITCA alumni and members will constitute the functions of the Outreach Service.

II. ITCA Activities

ITCA has been involved in the following major activities since its launch during ADF '99:

a. Exhibition

Since its establishment ITCA has been organizing several exhibitions including major events at African Development Forum (ADF) 1999, ADF 2000, ADF III, CODI and other conferences held at the UNCC. ITCA has also maintained a permanent exhibition in the UNCC since April 2001 and exhibited at three events outside the UNCC in three African countries: Johannesburg, South Africa and Bamako, Mali and Sheraton Addis, Ethiopia.

Exhibition on Major Conferences at the UNCC

Posters and virtual exhibitions during the ADF '99.

The main objective of this exhibition was to raise the awareness of the delegates to the Forum on the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for African nations' socio-economic development. The exhibition tried to deliver messages in the following five areas.

- What kinds of Information and Communication Technologies are available globally?
- How have these technologies been used in the African and the global context?
- Where African nations stand in the context of the global ICT development indicators?
- How can these technologies be used to expedite Africa's development agenda?
- What can decision makers do to enhance Africa's inclusion to the globalisation and information revolution?

The major themes of the ITCA exhibition included:

- Major milestones in computing history that have shaped today's technologies and that will lead to tomorrow's technologies
- How communication networks work and impact human life?
- How ICTs are used in various sectors such as education, health, e-commerce, SMEs, etc.

Panel and virtual exhibitions during the ADF 2000.

ITCA organized panel and virtual exhibitions during ADF 2000 to emphasize the use of ICTs in the health sector in general and combating HIV/AIDS in particular.

The panel exhibition prepared included: a statement by Mr. Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, on dangers of HIV/AIDS; statistical information regarding global HIV infection as of end of 1999, spread of HIV overtime in Sub-Saharan Africa, the impact of AIDS on Africa's economy, best country practices and what can be done; various best practices in the utilization of ICTs in the health sector and how ICTs are deployed in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The virtual exhibitions included the following:

- **Health statistics:** displayed health statistics data, for all of the African countries grouped in 5 regions, which included the indicators like demography, family planning, social & economic, HIV/AIDS, maternal health, health service and finance, etc.

- **Internet Health resources:** was a compilation of informative and relevant web sites on information related to HIV/AIDS and other health and medical issues.
- **Health educational kiosk:** was designed to demonstrate the use of ICT for educating people. The system uses a touch sensitive technology, which can be used by anyone with no training on operating a computer. The contents are categorised under the following main topics: HIV/AIDS, common diseases, family health, reproductive health, injuries, and health tips.
- **HIV/AIDS multimedia kiosk:** This is also a touch screen-based multimedia kiosk is built to educate illiterate community people on the basic facts on HIV/AIDS. The topics include: What is HIV/AIDS?, How to protect yourself?, How do you get HIV?, What are the signs?, Testing HIV? And living with HIV?
 Currently, we have only English version for demonstration purpose. We anticipate to translate it into local languages and demonstrate it in Telecentres, or community centres.
- **Macromedia Flash movies:** animated slides that display HIV/AIDS spread in Africa, various UNAIDS statistical slides, previous World AIDS Day themes, AIDS clock, etc. in a large display.
- **Mapping Malaria Risk in Africa (MARA):** displayed information about MARA, which is a collaboration initiated to provide an atlas of malaria for Africa through the use of a Geographic Information System (GIS) by integrating spatial malaria and environmental data sets, and producing maps on the type and severity of malaria transmission
- **Medical and Health Library 1.1:** this is a CD-ROM containing more than 300 publications or more than 35,000 pages of knowledge which covers: clinical treatment, emergencies, essential drugs, family planning, food and nutrition, health education, HIV/AIDS, medical equipment, public health, research, and sanitation.
 About 1500 copies were distributed to the ADF participants.

Panel and virtual exhibitions during the ADF III.

ITCA has presented its exhibition materials during ADF III. The materials include exhibition panels and poster on regional integration, touch screen kiosks containing African web sites, NICI plans and strategies, regional integration efforts, and the first release of the African Regional Integration Portal. The portal was launched at the exhibition on March 07, 2002. The other exhibition content presented was an animated multimedia presentation on ADF, Regional Integration efforts, the Founding Fathers, Air routes, ARIA overview, etc. The database of African experts and the Diaspora and Database of African development institutions were launched at this event along with the information resource on regional integration web portal.

Training was also one of the components ITCA was engaged in during the forum. ITCA provided a 4 – day training on Internet use for policy makers in French and English.

Ad hoc Exhibition in other events

Some of the events where ITCA has organized exhibitions are:

- The Ethiopian Information Technology Professionals Association's (EITPA) annual conference held in March 2001.

- The annual meeting of the Advisory Committee on the African Information Society Initiative (ATAC) and the expert group meeting on Africa's contribution to the Dot force, held in April 2001.
- The Second meeting of the Committee on Development Information (CODI) held in September 2001.
- Capacity Building Workshop for African Civil Society
- Meeting of the African Parliamentary Union held from May 6-7, 2002.
- Summit of COMESA Heads of State and Government held from May 22-23, 2002.
- The third annual meeting of the Advisory Committee on the African Information Society Initiative (ATAC), held from 4 - 5 November 2002.
- Open space 2002, held from 9-11 December 2002.

Permanent Exhibition

A standing exhibition has been initiated at the ground floor of the UNCC since 26 April 2001. The exhibition site displays information on how to use ICTs for African development in general. In particular, using touch screen kiosks, videos and print media, it puts emphasis on the use of ICTs in the health sector in general and combating HIV/AIDS in particular.

Mobile Exhibition

ITCA has taken its exhibition materials and display them in other parts of the continent to promote the Centre's activities in connection with major events. In this framework ITCA participated as exhibitor during:

Telecom Africa 2001

ITCA participated on the ITU Telecom Africa 2001 event by exhibiting posters, virtual exhibition materials and various publications of ECA. The exhibition provided information to over seven hundred visitors. The content displayed reflect: ECA and ICTs in Africa, networking and communication, Geographic Information System and the use of ICTs in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises, electronic commerce, education, health care, and ICTs for regional integration.

Bamako 2002

The African Regional Conference on preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva 2003 and Tunisia 2005) held on May 26-30 in Bamako, Mali.

ITCA's mission at Bamako 2002 consisted of exhibiting of posters, virtual materials and deliverables. The posters exhibited reflect: ITCA activities, Cisco women's internet networking training, status of NICI plans and strategies in Africa, satellite communications in Africa- existing and planned earth stations, trans-African highways, map and websites of regional economic communities in Africa and Internet density in Africa.

ITCA used the opportunity to distribute publications and CD-ROM that contained wide variety of publications and documents produced at ECA on major conferences such as African Development Forum (ADF) 99, ADF 2000, ADF III, CODI-I and CODI-II.

Jobs 2002 A "One-Stop-Shop"

ITCA also exhibited at the Sheraton Addis during the Jobs 2002, a "One-Stop-Shop" job fair organized by Talent Search (a private company) in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on 14 December 2002. Posters and multimedia that showcase the value of ICTs for development were used in the event. In addition to the deliverables (ITCA brochure, AISI brochure and DISD publications) ITCA also used the

opportunity to distribute and collect filled questionnaire from participants of the event for use in the African experts database. IOM is a partner of ITCA on development of the database of African experts and the Diaspora.

b. Training activities

Training for policy makers

One of ITCA's activities is providing focused training for policy makers on specific areas of the utilization of ICT that can enhance their competency and adaptability to the required skills for ICT-related sector applications as well as their capacity to choose among ICT options. ITCA organized two main workshops to raise the awareness of policy makers on the role of ICTs for development.

Ambassadors training

ITCA organized a series of introductory workshops on information and communication technology issues and Internet use for the benefit of African Ambassadors residing in Addis Ababa. The workshop was held twice a week from 8 to 29 June 2001. Twenty Ambassadors participated in the training, which was delivered in English and French.

Seminar series on ICT awareness for Ethiopian parliamentarians

A seminar series on ICT awareness for Ethiopian parliamentarians was launched on March 27, 2003. The seminar series is intended to raise awareness of Ethiopian Members of Parliament on ICT for development issues. Over 150 MPs from the various standing committees of the parliament are expected to participate in these workshops in groups of 40 for over two months.

ITCA has also provided training in ICT issues and Internet use for participants of different meetings that took place at the UNCC. In this regard selected participants were trained in the following events:

- ADF III held from March 3-8, 2002 participants in the policy maker category,
- Participants of the Capacity Building Sensitization Workshop for Senior Policy Managers from IGAD and ECA countries held from 30th September – 4th October 2002, and
- Participants of the conference on “The Challenges of Globalization to Democratic Governance in Africa: What Role for Civil Societies and the Stakeholders” held from 2-5 December 2002.

Training of African Women

ITCA organized Cisco Networking Academy Program, Internet networking training, in collaboration with Cisco systems inc. and InfoDev of the World Bank. ITCA launched this training to address the digital divide expressed in the unequal access of women and men in ICTs. The program is a 6-month residential course that leads to a Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certification upon successful completion. It follows the established Cisco Networking Academy Program operational in more than 133 countries. The program also includes other modules on gender and development, entrepreneurship and business management, ICT policies and challenges for African development, etc. prepared by the relevant ECA program divisions.

The program was launched on August 2001 with the training of 25 women from the following 17 countries: Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi,

Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. This course was completed on February 2002.

The second Cisco Internet networking training for French-speaking African women was delivered from June 27 – December 27, 2002 to trainees from the following 19 countries: Bénin, Guinée, Iles Maurices, Madagascar, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Thad, Burkina Faso, Togo, Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (RDC), Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti and Mali. The course was successfully completed on December 2002.

Training of Instructors for Cisco Academies in Africa

ITCA has trained 17 instructors of Cisco Academies from African countries in teaching the 1st and 2nd semester contents of the Cisco curriculum. Ten other instructors from African countries were also trained in the semesters 3 and 4 curriculum. The same instructors' training was provided to UN volunteers (Urns) from 13 African countries.

In-house training support

ITCA also provided technical support and its training facilities for other divisions within ECA, namely, for the:

- Communication Team to train journalists in using ICT tools,
- Information Systems Service to train ECA staff on Windows 2000 and other programs,
- African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD) to train its staff in web development and related issues,
- Economic and Social Policy Division (ESPD) to train selected member States in using WTO information and web facilities, and
- Communication Team at ECA to train staff in a document tracking system.

c. Database and portal development at ITCA

ITCA has been developing databases and web-portals aimed at demonstrating the values of ICTs as a tool for development in the African situation. The databases and portals developed and demonstrated have been designed to work on touch screen kiosks so that any one with minimal computer knowledge can use them. In addition to the web-portals and kiosks developed for ADF2000 the following databases and web-portals were developed (and some kiosks were upgraded or due process of upgrading to web-portals):

Database of African Experts and the Diaspora

The Database of African Experts and the Diaspora was a recommendation of the Workshop on the Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa, which was organized by ECA in February 2000 in collaboration with the International Office for Migration (IOM) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. The main objective is to collect data on African Experts - locally based and those in the Diaspora – compile and organize it in the form of a database and disseminate the information using various media (Print, CD-ROM and Web.) This will strengthen the human resource base available to enhance the national planning process in general and to assist policy reforms, and human resources development plans and exchange of research project staff. The database will also be used by ECA to locate and recruit consultants.

Currently, the database has over 800 records and while about 100 records are being edited for inclusion. To supplement the manual data entry (and simplify and speed up data entry), an

online data entry mechanism was developed and is being tested. In this mechanism, new data will be channeled to a temporary database where editing/validity check is done and those records that fulfill the set of criteria devised will be finally entered to the online database.

A prototype database was developed and posted during ADF III at:

<http://www.uneca.org/itca/ariportal/db.htm>

Database of African Development Institutions

The Database of African Development institutions was designed to store data on African Development institutions and to compile and disseminate the information using various media such as directories, CD-ROM, publishing on the Web, etc. This database is believed to constitute an essential information base where member States could tap into for identifying development institutes they require to establish and maintain networks. Currently, the database holds data for nearly 90 African development institutions.

A prototype database was developed and posted during ADF III at:

<http://www.uneca.org/itca/ariportal/db.htm>

ITCA web

ITCA has developed and maintained its own web site where its activities, achievements, announcements and other portals developed are posted.

The URL is: <http://www.uneca.org/itca/>

Information Resources on Regional Integration in Africa

The portal on Information Resources on Regional Integration in Africa was launched during ADF III. The portal contains documents, databases, discussion fora, regional integration efforts, thematic papers on economic integration; peace, security and human rights; institutional capacity and human rights, photograph gallery, etc.

This portal is posted at: <http://www.uneca.org/itca/ariportal/>

Internet health resources portal

The Internet health resources component of the ITCA virtual exhibition is a compilation of informative and relevant web sites on information related to HIV/AIDS and other health and medical issues. The site is categorized into different topics, which include: HIV/AIDS Specific Sites; associations, organizations, and governments from Africa and other regions; publications and journals; health and medical sites; electronic discussion links; and search engines and information gateways.

This portal is posted at: <http://www.uneca.org/itca/healthport/>

Issues on Yamoussoukro Decision portal

This portal was developed for RCID and holds documents to the implementation of the Yamoussoukro declaration concerning the liberalization of access to air transport markets in Africa.

This portal is posted at: <http://www.uneca.org/itca/Yamoussoukro/>

Portal on e-Governance resource

The information resources on good governance in Africa are expected to be launched for CODI III and ADF IV. The target audiences are policy makers and planners from member States. It is intended to provide information resources on good governance in Africa in general and on the uses of ICTs for improved governance in particular. It is expected that e-governance portal will facilitate the availability of information on good governance in Africa from one source raising the awareness of policy makers and planners on good governance in and the uses of ICTs for improved governance.

Harmonization of database activities at ECA

Following instructions from the Executive Secretary, a Technical Committee on database development activities, chaired by ITCA/DISD was set up to prepare strategies that would be used to assess the needs and status of all databases/initiatives in ECA, and enable compatibility of data bases. The Technical Committee has started harmonizing the various databases of experts being developed at ECA.

III. The way forward

ITCA has been supported by a number of key partners, including, the World Bank, the Governments of Korea and Japan, and CISCO Systems. However, the unpredictability of available financial resources has put constraints to the centre's operations. In order not to jeopardize the activities of the centre, which was appreciated by member States on many occasions, a repositioning of ITCA is essential. In this regard, a new vision is being developed together with the related business plan, which will position ITCA as one of the main implementers of the AISI and the Canadian-supported IeRDN and Connectivity Africa projects.