

GUIDEBOOK FOR THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF
MULTI-PURPOSE
COMMUNITY TELECENTRES
IN THE MALDIVES

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Establishing the MCT

This booklet outlines helpful steps in establishing Multipurpose Community Telecenters (MCT) in the Republic of Maldives. Since the MCT is a technology hub providing many programs and services consultative meetings with the community, brainstorming and probing sessions will have to be conducted at initial stages. Attention has to be given to the needs of the people and the community as a whole and expressed in initial meetings. Key individuals from the community should be identified as champions to ensure the necessary support and buy in from the local community. The participation of local communities and their respective 'focal points' will assist in providing the necessary input and support required to identify the programs.

A step-by-step planning process has been provided to give a clear guidance in the setting up and operation of the Multi-purpose telecentres. The guideline can be utilised as a useful but general tool for the 3 models of MCTs proposed in the study that was conducted earlier. This guideline is an adaptation of related material prepared by UNESCO on the same subject. It has to be noted that these are just guidelines that would be helpful in planning and implementing MCTs. Communities will have their own strengths and problems that may not be reflected herein, and this guidebook should thus be considered as a reference material rather than a detailed listing of processes.

Step One: The Planning Process

Situational Analysis

When planning the set up of the MCT, it is important to know your community.

Some questions you could ask yourself are:

- What are the services and programs that are already available?
- What other facilities are there?
- Is there telephone access to this community?¹
- How many people live here?
- What is the breakdown of ages in this community?
- What is the general education level of the population?
- What are people generally interested in?
- Can we get equipment sent to this community?
- How far away are other services?
- Can people travel to get to these services?
- What industries support this community?
- Is there a main agricultural section of the community?
- Do tourists visit this community?

¹ Take this whole section towards the beginning

Another method to use in identifying your community, or planning for future development, is referred to as the SWOT Analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. An example is given below;

Strengths Lots of people wanting training Tourists want email People want to use Internet. No other photocopier in town	Weaknesses Lack of teachers to deliver training Not enough computers MCT space too small
Opportunities Publish local newspaper Print children's book Tender for data entry jobs for big companies	Threats Unsure of Government funding May have to move premises in 12 months and pay rent

2. Vision and Goals

The Management Committee should be clear about the goals and importance of team work.

It is very important that everyone on the MCT Management Committee, plus the staff and volunteers feel involved with the long-term vision and goals of the MCT.

3. Strategies and Actions

Working out a strategy to meet the vision and goals of the MCT includes the steps for each goal and also identifying the people who take on various tasks.

It is possible to group activities into three or four main areas – these are called the *Key Result Areas*. Some common headings are:

- Community Development
- Services and Programs
- Policies and Procedures
- Staffing

Community Development includes such things as:

- Developing partnerships with other organizations/agencies
- Encouraging and supporting leadership programs
- Identifying and responding to community needs
- Promoting cooperation between groups
- Researching collocation opportunities
- Supporting business enterprises
- Providing community access to technology

Services and Programs includes such things as:

- Providing cost effective services
- Delivering services to encompass all sections of the community
- Offering programs to reflect community needs
- Promoting the available services and programs to the community

Policies and Procedures includes such things as:

- Financial management
- Purchasing policies
- Code of Ethics / Conduct
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Dealing with complaints
- Implementing planning procedures

Staffing includes such things as:

- Training
- Professional development
- Performance reviews
- Roles of the Management Committee
- Volunteer recruitment and training

Once you have identified your *Key Result Areas*, then you can sort your actions and activities under the broad headings.

It is then important to allocate tasks and set a timeline for when things are going to get done. A mission and action plan has to be drawn with activity/action column, who is going to do it, deadline, resources needed and expected outcome.

Making It Happen

By setting out the planned activities and actions in a table it becomes clear what the MCT Management Committee expects people to do.

By properly reviewing the activities, the Management Committee can ensure that the MCT continues to grow and does not just keep offering the same services and programs.

The planning process identifies specific goals and tasks, so people can volunteer for just a small part of the whole plan, but still feel that their contribution is valued.

Step Two: Getting Started

Many people believe a Multipurpose Community Telecentre is just computers, Internet and email. This is incorrect. An MCT is a *technology hub* that allows a community to establish many programs and services, which provide social, economic and information technology support.

First it is important to take stock of the current situation. Therefore, arrange a public meeting with key people who live and work in the community in which you propose to establish the MCT.

They should represent a wide cross section of the community. For example; island administration, women's groups, health sector, etc.

These people will be the *movers and shakers* in the community, people who have good networks and the ability to contact key people who can help with funding, facilities and equipment. In addition, it is also important that these people have a good understanding of the programs and services needed by their local community, which will be discussed and identified at an Open Community Meeting.

Community meeting

To outline to participants what an MCT is, and what it can do for the local community and draw a Steering Committee responsible for establishing the MCT and overseeing the management. An Open Meeting for potential users should also be planned by the end of this meeting.

Step Three: Holding an Open Community Meeting

1. Advertise before hand using available mass media and make known to the whole community.
2. Give them opportunities to express what they need.
3. Come up with a list, to complement existing services.
4. Carry out a vote and record the numbers interested against each program.

The Speaker should then determine which are the 10 most popular programs and services the community desires. The list of 10 most desired services (don't forget to include your basic services) then becomes the foundation services the Committee will aim to provide when opening the MCT. A decision on the number of services will have to be finally made depending on the size of the population and the business model (see annex for short descriptions of the business models) that the community finds most suitable to adopt.

The additional programs and services listed should also be kept in numerical order, as once the first batch of services have been established, the Committee

can again refer to this list, drawn up by the community, and endeavor to provide these additional services as finance and facilities allow.

Co-location

Co-location with other community groups and facilities is possible. NGOs, emergency services, post office, fisheries, agriculture, labour market programs, community newspapers, technical training facilities can be considered.

Sustainability

Sufficient focus on sustainability would be a key contributing factor for the long term successes of the MCT. Sustainability must be given key consideration during the planning stage of the MCT and all means of achieving it should be explored at the initial stages and must continue throughout the life of the project. The Steering Committee shall be given clear instructions to structure the MCT with a strong emphasis on sustainable practices. For example, sustainability is possible if the MCT is a collocated, multipurpose entity. Co-location saves money as it involves shared equipment, working long hours through rostering and reallocation of staff in different areas.

Focus Groups

As a means of community engagement, focus groups are quite good at generating ideas for information services. They can involve specific target audiences with particular information needs; farmers, housewives, businessmen, youths, etc.

Step Four: MCT Management

The success of a new MCT will depend heavily on the appointment of a community representative Steering Committee and appointing the right MCT Manager.

The role of the Steering Committee

The MCT's Executive Body will be the Steering Committee. If the establishment of the Multipurpose Community Telecentre becomes a reality, this Committee should continue to manage the organization for the first year. At the end of the year, an Annual General Meeting should be held so that the community can elect new members or reelect old members to this Committee.

The role of the Executive Committee

- Overall management of the MCT.
- Appointment of the MCT Manager
- Overall supervision of the MCT Manager

- Drawing up and endorsing the Strategic Plan, which sets out the goals for the MCT for the year. Performance is measured against these goals on a quarterly or monthly basis to determine whether the MCT is on target to meet its commitments both financially and with regard to the development of programs and services promised.

It is also the duty of the MCT Committee and Staff to continually promote the programs and services of the Centre.

Management Committee's Code of Conduct

Having all members sign a Code of Conduct ensures that everyone knows what is expected of him or her. This is a good way of preventing problems in a professional way. The Steering/Management Committee needs to adopt some *General Principles of Official Conduct*. The following suggestions are made for possible inclusion.

- Members perform their duties with integrity and are honest in the use of official information, equipment and facilities
- No usage of information for personal benefit.
- MCT members and staff will demonstrate appropriate compartment at all times.
- The best interest of MCT will be priority to all others.

Step Five: Staff Appointments

The Committee must decide on the qualities of the manager to undertake this task. The best person to employ is someone who knows and understands the community and its needs has an acceptable level of technology skills, can handle money and above all talk to people and make them feel comfortable in this new technology environment. He should also be able to teach some basic use of computer to the local people and students.

Try to advertise the position in places where the type of person you are looking for will see it. This could be:

- On the community notice board
- In the community newspaper
- Over the radio during a community notices segment
- By word of mouth

The Steering/Management Committee is the employer, they must feel they can work with the proposed Manager, finalise the decision or hold further discussions.

Step Six: Services and Programs

- Forge partnerships with other organizations to share resources and not duplicate services and keep asking what else they would like to see at the MCT.
- The MCT should start by providing access to computers, the Internet and email, and also provide services such as photocopying and scanning. The Management Committee, the coordinators and the volunteers will quickly come up with new ideas as they get to know what people want.
- Often the MCT can provide new services and programs using the equipment they already own. It is just a matter of using your imagination to capture the interest of community members.
- Other times it will become necessary to buy new equipment so that new and exciting services can be offered. In this way the MCT can always provide services and programs that address the needs of the community.

Services

Phase One: these are examples of some of the services the MCT could be offering when it first starts.

- Access to computers, printers and scanners, internet, telephone access, sending and receiving faxes and book exchange.
- Provide meeting space for small groups – this is a useful way of bringing people into the MCT and promoting the services that you offer. By not charging very much, the MCT is providing a useful community service.
- Identification or passport photos – this requires an instant camera or a digital camera and a good colour printer. The photos can be scanned into the computer to make ID cards.
- Small jobs information board – for people to advertise jobs that they want done. The MCT can charge a small amount to put these advertisements onto the board.
- Give access to government forms and information. Sometimes the MCT can assist people fill in the forms and then fax them back to the relevant organization.
- computer classes – teaching basics – Internet and email, word processing, website creation/ desktop publishing, etc? You could charge a minimal fee and this usually could assist in the sustainability.

- Create a community webpage – highlighting the project, activities, updates and pictures. It helps create a sense of ownership and belonging for the community.

Phase Two: As the MCT grows, these are some of the extra services you could offer.

- Typing – word processing, binding and laminating.
- Job Application Assistance.
- Record, type and send the minutes for various organizations.
- Write grant applications – for the MCT as well as requests from individual community members. A good grant writer can help many community groups access funding for projects.
- Design and print – business cards, brochures, invitations, etc.

Services that could be offered include;

- Tourist information can be gathered, written and materials produced in the MCT.
- Graphic design service – design logos, layout, artwork for organizations.
- Interpreting/translation service – if this is needed and no one else in town offers the service then this is a worthwhile activity to promote.

Programs

Programs need to be developed to suit the needs of your community who will be informed through pin-ups, local newspaper, word-of-mouth, etc.

By organizing some programs, you are making the MCT an interesting place to be where lots of activities take place. You can offer programs to suit different types of people – for example workers, unemployed people, students, and people with various hobbies or interests.

Some ideas:

1. **Training** – basic computing and Internet for small groups. Talk to them how they wish to utilize the knowledge, e.g.; email knowledge about area of interest, exploring etc. most MCTs provide training to community members. This is often a course that the MCT has put together to teach

basic skills that the community wants. It could be reading and writing classes, computer classes, sewing classes or learning new agricultural methods.

- Other short courses – example: agricultural and fishing information, professional development, web page design, desktop publishing, first aid training, fire safety, etc.
- A club that supports the main industries in the community – for example agriculture, fisheries, horticulture, arts/crafts. These clubs can share information but also find relevant information or markets on the Internet. Seniors and Youth Clubs would bring about community bonding.

2. **Other Programs**

- Labour market programs – provide information and contacts for unemployed people, or people searching for new opportunities.
- Provide supported environment for people with special needs to access information – e.g. larger screen / print for people with eyesight difficulties, wheelchair access, bigger keyboard and mouse for people with movement difficulties.

Collocation and Partnerships

Who else could share the building with the MCT? The aim should be to create a central point where community could also come together. Alternatively, in a number of cases, the MCT may have to consider an existing location that people are familiar with and establish itself there to add value.

For example , MCTs can usefully partner with their community schools; for

- promoting teachers to use ICTs to run extra classes for pupils
- teacher training
- recruiting volunteers
- getting pupils to spread the word about the MCT within the community
- form an Internet club with pupils, to conduct specific projects for information gathering and services.

Other Ideas for co-location:

Library
Health services
Toy library
Agricultural and fisheries advisory services
Market services
Local government office
Education support office
Community newspaper, etc.

Issues that need considered when sharing the premises.

- who is responsible for the operation of the whole centre.
- how do you share the operating costs and how do you do the maintenance work? Who will be responsible for this?
- how do you ensure security of the whole building.

Telecentres Networking Together

Telecentres benefit from networking together in close associations for mutual support, sharing of experiences and knowledge. The Management must put every effort to communicate with the managements of other similar telecentres on other islands and explore the possibilities for positive developments through networking and knowledge sharing.

Step Seven: Building and Equipment

Assessing your building requirements

It is important to find the best possible building for your Multipurpose Community Telecentre (MCT) so therefore you will need to research all the options.

- Is there a rent-free building available?
- Is there a building available that is rarely used?
- Will the government or local business supply a building or help to pay the rent costs?
- Is it centrally located?
- Is there access to telecommunication and electricity facilities and internet connectivity?
- Is the adequate security measures for the room/ building – locks; grilles; etc?

Assessing your furniture requirements

When first setting up the MCT, many communities look for secondhand furniture that is either donated or provided at a low cost. This means that more of your set-up funding can be used on buying the required equipment.

The most common furniture requirements include:

- Reception desk – for general enquiries, and to receive payments
- Chair – for Manager / volunteers
- Tables/benches for computers, printer, scanner.....
- Chairs – adjustable height (aim for 2 per computer)

- Shelves – for books, pamphlets, files
- Filing cabinets
- Pin-up boards for displays – these can be either wall mounted or self standing. Some MCT's use the self standing pin-up boards to create more private spaces where confidential work can be carried out
- Extra chairs for people waiting
- Wall clock – easy to read to calculate customer time using equipment
- Meeting table and chairs – usually to cater for 8-12 people

Assessing your equipment and software requirements

MCTs start with the basic equipment and then as their income increases, they purchase equipment to address needs identified in their community. It is up to the Management Committee to choose the equipment that is likely to have a high usage by your community. Listed below is a range of equipment that MCT's could initially have during start-up.

Computers – Number of units will be decided by the Steering Committee every year. It is recommended that you purchase the best possible computers (this of course depends on the funding available).

UPS – Buy UPS as backup support for computers. Heavy duty UPS will be preferred but you should plan it according to resources available.

Printers – laser or Inkjet, colour or black and white. These are linked or networked to all the computers.

Modems – either internal or external –56K. You need to check the speed available on your telephone lines. Most computers do come with in-built modems, so check these. But buying one extra external modem will serve the purpose of backup well.

Server – used to control the software and settings on the MCT computers. Do not go for expensive servers. A normal PC can also be turned into a server.

LAN – Local Area network. Ensure that you buy enough cables and connectors.

Digital camera – to copy pictures into documents/emails

Photocopier – lease or buy – depending on the expected use it may be worth considering a second-hand, reconditioned photocopier. The newer models have a range of features to choose from if you intend offering more advanced photocopying services. Ensure that the electricity available in your community can stand the load required by the copier machine.

Laminator – these come in various sizes including A4, A3, up to poster size. A laminator can be expensive, but in some communities it is well used. At least two, but preferably three, quotes should be obtained for all equipment over an agreed amount.

Television – for training purposes. Choose a size suitable for the room and number of expected people viewing it at any onetime.

Facsimile machine – to send faxes

Video – to record and play tele-education lessons

Other equipment - **Scanner**, binder, hole punch and telephone.

Other office essentials (ex; stationary).

Assets Register

Proper inventory should be kept along with warranty cards and trouble shoot history.

Step Eight: Financial Management

It is important that the MCT has clear financial processes in place so that it can be accountable to its members, sponsors and to the government.

It is the responsibility of the Management Committee to ensure proper financial management of the MCT. This includes having proper systems in place to record all income and expenditure, submitting proper reports to funding bodies, setting a budget and ensuring that all expenditure is within the budget, and having an audit completed each year.

The financial management system involves the following:

- **Treasurer** - checks the proper functioning of the financial system, prepares reports and over sees booking functions.
- **Bookkeeper** – responsible for financial transactions, including liaison with the bank and maintains financial documents.
- **Budget** – will be drawn by the management committee in consultation with then staff. It should be used as a good planning tool to reflect financial expectations of the MCT activities.
- **Cheque Account** - will be necessary for effecting payments.
- **Accounting systems** – this will be most probably established by the bookkeeper. A computerized system should be encouraged rather than the manual system. This would reflect efficiency and create computer awareness in the area.

As with any financial system there should be bank reconciliations and auditing to ensure proper screening and validity of financial management practiced and employed by the MCT. This would avoid any misinterpretations the use of finance, which often occurs in the small communities.

Step Nine: Operating Procedures

Clear cut operating procedures should be laid down for all aspects of operation including:

- 1. Daily opening and Closing of the MCT**
- 2. Operation of the reception and cash handling procedure.**
- 3. Using Equipment**

It is advisable to set up a procedures manual detailing the basic steps for turning on and off equipment, and doing day-to-day procedures.

4. Keeping Statistics

It is a good idea to keep a log sheet of the services used by customers. The compiled statistics will give your MCT Management Committee a very good understanding of the usage of your services and show variation between months.

5. Charging for its services

There should not be an attitude that community-owned and managed facilities should be free. While the MCT is owned and managed by the community it has to pay its way and therefore fees must be charged for the programs and services offered.

Sample registration and Charge Sheet

<u>Date</u>	<u>User Name</u>	<u>Service Used</u>	<u>Qty</u>	<u>Charged Rate (Rf.)</u>	<u>Total Collected</u>
12/2/2004	Mohamed Ibrahim	Photocopy pages	2 pages	1.00	2.00
13/2/2004	Abdulla Easa	Internet	15mins	2.00	30.00

Step Ten: Customer Service and Promotional Issues

If the centre does not provide customer service it will not be successful.

The customers entering your Centre will come from many different walks of life. Some will know exactly what they want to do and others will need staff assistance. Keeping people happy is top priority for the MCT. If people are unhappy they will not return and the MCT will not prosper.

It is no doubt that the MCT will easily gain popularity through word-of-mouth in island communities. The MCT will be a one-step service station that would benefit almost the entire community.

Step Eleven: Evaluation and Measurement

There is a need for all MCTs to take steps to evaluate the success and the feasibility of the initiative – both in terms of financial sustainability, reach of the services, type of services that are of value to the community and issues to be tabled to the Steering Committee.

A budget versus actual report will have to be prepared at least on a semi annual basis to ensure that financial targets are being met and to review and propose new strategies. Other non-financial targets such out reach and awareness level of the services provided must also be monitored on a regular basis.

Annex 1.

MODEL 01 - Commercial Model (For population of more than 5000)

General Description

This model represents private commercially owned telecenters. These are relatively modest with 5 terminals mainly for Internet access and computer usage. In addition, the commercial model would offer photocopy and fax services and conduct occasional classes for the island community in areas of internet usage, awareness and application. The main objective of the commercial model would evolve around the concept of profit-maximization and as such would be feasible only for communities where the target market is significant.

The sustainability of the commercial model would greatly depend on the general computer literacy of the community. As such, a significant amount of funds need to be injected to marketing and advertising in order to create a general awareness among the market.

MODEL 02 – Community Model (For population of between 1500 - 5000)

General Description

Most of the established telecenters are run either by the Island Development Committees (IDCs) or the Women's Development Committees (WDCs) or by some of the NGOs. These are most commonly established either through donation by a development project or through funds raised by the community.

The sustainability of the community model would greatly depend on reduction and control of the operating expenses. In addition, efforts need to be made to promote the telecenter in order to generate more revenue.

MODEL 03 – Mixed Model (For population of less than 1500)

General Description

The mixed model is a distinctive model and is targeted to those communities where the population is less than 1500. The main distinction in this model is in the mode of financing. The financing is raised dually, that is by an external party such as the government or foreign aid and the Island Development Committees (IDCs) or the Women's Development Committees (WDCs).

The sustainability of the community model would greatly depend on reduction and control of the operating expenses. In addition, efforts need to be made to promote the

telecenter in order to generate more revenue. However, the main objective of the set-up of this model would not be profit-maximization, but, would evolve on the concept of provision of other services that would yield economic benefits to the community.