MODULE 4   PLANNING A TELECENTRE

UNIT 5   PLANNING FOR CONTENT DELIVERY

Structure of the Unit

5.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- Identify different ways to build content
- Share examples of content building
- Explain what the research on content says
- List ways to manage content
- Develop a plan to build content from and for the community you serve

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit you learned about the services which can be delivered through the telecentre. You also learned about what the research showed and what you need to keep in mind for the success of your telecentre: relevance of the content for sustainability of your telecentre.

Before we go into that let's clarify what content is. For the purposes of this curriculum and your work:

Content is information you offer in your telecentre and that which meets the needs of the community. Content is not something static. Think of it as a river - fluid, dynamic and changing – which needs to be constantly updated, as people's needs change. The management and delivery of content is an essential part of a sustainable business plan for telecentres.

Research shows that telecentres and people who staff them play several roles. More specifically as:

- *Intermediaries* (or people who bring two or more parties together)
- *Aggregators* (bringing information together) and
- *Distributors of content from other people and organisations*

These three roles suggest more of *a content facilitation role*.

You now know that planning the content is an important item to make your telecentre successful in delivering useful services to the community. For this you need to be well organised so that your telecentre clients can access information and services easily, sometimes without your assistance.

On the other hand, besides content being well managed, you must have a proper business model built on a range of revenue oriented content-based services. This is required for your sustainability. By understanding your clients' needs, you will have to package the content and services which can be a business transaction. For this purpose, you have to develop, store and deliver the content in various ways.

In this Unit you will learn about how to develop content for your clients.

Content to Meet Community Needs

We have earlier discussed about the importance of services and content for telecentres.   Why is content important for your telecentre?

Your clients - farmers, teachers, students - will use the Internet only if the information they need is available in a way that is easy to use. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility and challenge of your telecentre to cater to your clients. Only then will they and others that use your services will be attracted to your Telecentre.

For the Telecentre to be effective and useful to local community there is no alternative to *developing content* in an appropriate way and delivering it through a user friendly mechanism.   In this Unit we are to focus on planning for content development and packaging for the prospective users.

Most telecentres aim to provide and improve access to information for a wide variety of community people. Hence, it is important to develop services that your potential clients can use. Your clients can be farmers, students, women and rural businesses – among many others. To meet the needs of these and other groups, you will have to develop a wide variety of content for their needs.

The telecentre is an environment and place where the community gets access to relevant information, thus leading to empowerment of Individuals and society as a whole.

5.2 PLANNING FOR CONTENT TO OFFER

How do you decide what content you should offer in your Telecentre? Here are some leads:

- It should be **relevant** to the local community. This means that people in the community need to be able to use the content that you offer. It has to have meaning for them and their lives.

- The content you offer has to be **developed and upgraded continually**. As you will know, there is change all the time. And this influences the content. Changing, developing and upgrading content will make your Telecentre effective and dynamic (active), adequate and useful.

- Content must be available in the **local language**. So, if your target group is a rural community with special focus on farmers, content should primarily relate to agriculture and be offered in the local language.

See Table 1 (below) for the kinds of content that can be delivered from telecentres.

Table 1

Categories of Information / Services / Content that Telecentres Deliver			
Category	Examples	Source	Delivery Mechanism
1. Generic (general) Information	E-government, agricultural extension, distance education, e-commerce, e-health, news, weather, etc.	Government and national/regional institutions.	Institutional partnerships.
2. ICT-focused Information services	E-mail, voice over IP, chat, internet searches, word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, ICT training, printing, photocopying, scanning, newsletters etc.	Local Tele-Centre owners, operators and staff.	Creative and client-centric entrepreneurial activity at the Tele-Centre.
3. Information on development programmes	Heath, credit, small enterprise development, skills training, education	National/regional development initiatives.	Pro-active marketing of Tele-Centres among NGOs,
4. Local and community-based information	Local laws, poverty reduction schemes, local NGO activities, yellow pages, job placement services, classified advertisements, market prices, bus schedules, doctors and vets lists etc.	Local activists, NGOs, community-based organisations, government offices, social entrepreneurs, volunteers, schools, etc.	Community outreach, community mobilisation, local networking.

5.3 RESEARCH ON CONTENT

As you have learned in the earlier Units, there is now a solid body of research on telecentres around the world.

This will be useful to you as you prepare to set up or improve your telecentre. It is wise to learn from the successes as well as mistakes of others.

Research has found that:

Telecentre projects have been more focused on connectivity and infrastructure issues. Instead they could have addressed or offered *demand based services,* and made an effort in developing *demand oriented services* and content for the web.

Telecentres are not addressing the core issues of rural livelihood or assessing local needs. Most Telecentres are *'supply driven'* initiatives.

In the field of content offering and development, research further shows:

- *Lack of understanding* of local demand among telecentre personnel

- *Absence of a network* and *lack of partnership* among the stakeholders
- *Lack of resources (financial and otherwise) to develop content*
- *Lack of availability of local and relevant contents* in organised format
- *Essentiality of content in the local language* (see definition of Unicode at end of this Unit).

The above mentioned concerns can be overcome by designing and developing a strategic approach based on the user perspective. For example, paying attention to:

1. *Understanding* the local need (what local people need and want)
2. *Building broader partnerships among the stakeholders*
3. *Establishing a mechanism to share resources* (content) available on and off the Internet
4. *Exchanging experiences and learning in content development (*through agencies such as telecentre.org Academy)
5. *Mobilising resources for research, new content development and update of content* (through grants, work contracts).
6. *Capacity building of the practitioners including telecentre operators* (in-service training and via workshops offered by various stakeholders).

5.4 ESSENTIALS FOR CONTENT DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGY, RESOURCES PARTNERSHIPS

There are several things needed for content development. Let us look at strategy and resources, for a start.

Strategy*:* It is important for you to design an appropriate strategy to address the core issues of content development. You may recall from the earlier units that a strategy is a deliberate plan which spells out how something will be done. It is something you develop right at the very beginning of setting up the telecentre. If you do not understand 'local need', then it will be difficult to develop content.

Resources: Often there is some investment (with low or no return) at an early stage of content development. Sometimes the private sector or a donor agency has made this investment. But, no one stakeholder can do it alone. For this reason development agencies have been involved in supporting the private sector's development strategy.

Sometimes, projects are also developed on priority and conditions where 'content' are not even an issue.

Awareness and understanding of both donor communities and practitioners have increased during the last couple of years and the situation will further improve if advocacy can be made continuously.

Eventually, mobilising resources for content development depends on the strategy adopted by your Telecentre initiatives and commitment from the development partners. Most such initiatives depend on donor money for implementation. Hence, development partners play an important role in various areas. If the roles of the participating institutions can be clearly defined, the question of 'who will do what' settled, and the core areas of support identified, it would be easier to attract development partners' investment in content.

For you, as a telecentre owner or manager, it will be crucial to be in touch with these development partners – to keep updated about funding possibilities as well as activities and projects that could generate income for the Telecentre and the community.

The private sector also plays an important role in taking forward the content update mechanism and in creating a competitive landscape in the content development market. You may want to keep updated with the funds, projects and income generating opportunities offered by them.

5.5 CONTENT AND BUSINESS MODELS

If content is developed but there is no 'business model', it will be difficult to operate your telecentre successfully. The sustainability of your telecentre depends on being able to operate it on a business model.

In terms of usage of content/services of Telecentre, the main proposition for 'sustainability' is: *Content = Information -> Knowledge -> Sustainable development*

If you develop effective content it contributes to the process of establishing an 'Information Society'.

Use of the content by groups who can benefit by them will increase their knowledge base and facilitate increased productivity.

The process of content development leads to information sharing and knowledge enhancement, which will eventually play a role in achieving sustainable development.

As you have learned in this and the previous unit, there are some crucial questions in local content production, adaptation (making sure they are suitable for local conditions) and sharing. Some of these could be:

- What content is available and in what form?
- Who 'owns' this content?
- What motivates 'owners' to make content available to others?
- Who needs or wants to have access to it, and why?
- What mechanisms or applications are used to facilitate the creation, adaptation, and exchange of local content?
- What constraints or obstacles - linguistic, technical, human or institutional - are limiting local content creation, exchange or dissemination?
- Under what circumstances does local content flourish?
- What innovative or creative approaches and solutions are emerging?

Issues regarding Content Development

Keep the following in mind when developing content:

1. Understand the local requirement i.e. areas and issues underlying the content
2. Use the local language
3. Establish a mechanism to update content and to collect feedback
4. Use alternate technologies to develop the content
5. Design a convenient medium to deliver the content
6. Develop a system to integrate diversified content or for bundling of content

7. Enhance knowledge of operators at the field level so as to enable them to understand the value of content
8. Focus on providing a robust connectivity and infrastructure

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Note:
a) Please the space below each question for your answer
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit

1. List three things that determine what content to offer

   i.   _____
  ii.   _____
 iii.   _____

2. Describe why telecentres need to be sustainable (in 25 words or less)

_____

_____

5.6 SUMMING UP

In this unit we have learned about planning for the content. The main points are:

- Telecentres serve as *intermediaries* (or people who bring two or more parties together); *aggregators* (bringing information together) and *distributors of content from other people and organisations.*
- Strategy and resources are essential for content development
- Content development also needs a 'business model'
- Relationships with other stakeholders are essential for content development
- Mobilising resources for content development depends on the strategy adopted by your telecentre initiatives and commitment from the development partners
- Village elders and leaders act as a main source of information and communication
- Flexibility and adaptation are essential for content and telecentre success
- Creating content from the local community is as essential part of content creation
- Local content should be available in local languages and in the audio video (AV) formats

5.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: MODEL ANSWERS

1. Two things essential for content development are:
Strategy

It is important to design an appropriate strategy to address the core issues of content development. If you do not understand 'local need', then it will be difficult to develop content.

Resources

There are various stakeholders in the content development scenario, social development investors, private sector, and government institutions. An appropriate strategy is to be made to tie up with all these resources of content development.

2. The main proposition of sustainability is :

Content = Information -> Knowledge -> Sustainable development

5.8 DEFINITIONS

1. Intermediaries

An intermediary is a third party that offers intermediation services between two parties. Telecentre Operators or Manager functions as intermediaries. They bring information from the outside world to the rural community and take the community to the world outside.

2. Aggregators

Telecentre Operators or Managers take on roles as aggregators of information. The term is used for news aggregation, websites etc. which stores similar stories together. In developing the content for telecentres, the Operator / Manager will have to aggregate, package and distribute the information according to the needs of the community.

5. 9 ASSIGNMENT

Choose **one content** that you would like to offer in your telecentre and make a presentation on it.

The presentation could be

1. A 5-7 minute cassette or CD audio recording
2. A video tape (5 minutes)
3. A written essay (1000 words)
4. A drawing
5. A poem
6. A photos essay (with about 10 photos and text)

5. 10 GLOSARY AND REFERENCES

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