

AUSTRALIA

1. Describe agency's/country's overall strategy or approach in using ICT for development

a) Overall strategy

AusAID's guiding theme is to ensure that developing countries are able to access and maximise the benefits from the new information technologies and to ensure that ICTs are integrated into the country program strategies for each partner country. The primary agency wide initiative is the 5 year Virtual Colombo Plan (VCP), launched as a partnership with the World Bank in August 2001. The VCP aims to enhance the achievement of AusAID's development objectives through promoting and facilitating the appropriate use of information and communication technologies particularly in those sectors where Australia has recognised expertise.

b) Guiding Principles - for using ICTs in development:

- That the focus should remain firmly on improving people's well being, and reducing poverty.
- ICTs to be used as a tool for development, rather than as an objective.
- To ensure that the benefits from the increased use of ICTs are enjoyed by all, including women, and that no segments within society are made worse off – through addressing their constraints to effective access.

c) Objectives

- To enhance partner countries' development outcomes by:
- improving their access to quality development knowledge through use of ICTs
- enhancing education outcomes through use of ICTs
- promoting and facilitating an enabling environment for the appropriate use of ICTs in development

d) Areas of application include:

- Encouraging and facilitating adoption of appropriate policy frameworks for development and use of ICTs
- Building human capital to fully utilise opportunities presented by ICTs
- Developing and delivering quality development knowledge
- Developing, supporting and coordinating appropriate knowledge infrastructure
- Acting as a catalyst for the development and adoption of appropriate ICTs

e) References and web-links to relevant strategy documents and guidelines

- AusAID website, including reference to the Virtual Colombo Plan - <http://www.aid.gov.au>
- The Australian Development Gateway - internet based website for development information and related documents (<http://www.developmentgateway.com.au>)

2. Identify the main modalities for ICT integration into overall development strategy

a) Modalities for ICT integration and program delivery

The VCP encourages each country program within AusAID's formal aid program to consider ICTs for development through:

- Strengthening and extending ICT components for existing activities
- Developing new and relevant ICT initiatives for key sectors

Within the broader framework of ICTs for development, the VCP encourages particular focus on ICTs to support Basic Education including teacher education and policy development, Global Knowledge Infrastructure including infrastructure development and knowledge gateways, Public Policy, Knowledge Dissemination, including sharing relevant Australian research and knowledge and Higher Education, including development of distance education.

b) Partnership, including Private sector

Specific activities are contracted to the private, public and NGO sectors. Partnerships are also being developed in respect to providing internet based access to relevant development knowledge including such organisations as ACIAR, ACER.

c) Participation, if any, in joint or multi donor ICT for development programs

- The VCP is a joint initiative with the World Bank
- Participation in multi-lateral forums promoting ICTs for development, eg APEC, ASEAN, WSIS

d) Estimate of global amount of funding with indications of timeframe

The Government of Australia has committed AUD\$200 million to the VCP over 5 years

e) Lessons learned from country/agency's experience

In the process of being consolidated

f) Examples of best practice

In the process of being consolidated

3. Describe the institutional arrangements made by your country for mainstreaming ICT within its development strategy

a) Main agencies in ICT for development

AusAID works within country strategy frameworks developed in conjunction with the government of each of its partner countries. These strategies identify and address the development priorities for the country. AusAID expects that ICTs will be integrated into these frameworks and programs.

AusAID expects to coordinate closely with other Australian specialist agencies in the development and provision of ICT relevant development activities, particularly through its own contracting processes in planning and implementing relevant activities. Australian public, private and non-government agencies/institutions are likely to be included through formal

institutional and contracting arrangements from the education, research, health and agriculture, law and governance, and infrastructure sectors. Key local partner agencies include Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and Australian Council for Educational Research.

b) Agencies' roles in the various stages (strategy, operations)

AusAID primarily seeks the support of relevant organisations and individuals for each stage through contract arrangements for each activity. Lists of key contractors can be obtained through AusAID's official website.

c) Contact details of country's/agency's ICT for development focal point

AusAID has established a VCP unit to coordinate and monitor the implementation of this initiative across the agency. Contact details include:

VCP Unit
AusAID
GPO Box 887
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

Phone: 61 2 6206 4000
Fax: 61 2 6206 4036
e-mail: vcp@ausaid.gov.au
Internet: <http://www.ausaid.gov.au>
Australian Development Gateway: <http://developmentgateway.com.au>

4. Country/regional focus of the ICT -enhanced development strategy

a) General description of regional and country focus

Australia's official aid program is targeted to the Asia and Pacific regions, with a small component directed to southern Africa. Australia is also represented on international and regional organisations such as APEC

b) More detailed information on main recipients of agency's enhanced development strategy

- Country specific strategies are in the process of being developed; however, it is expected that in line with AusAID's broader ICTs for development strategy, each country and regional program will develop an enhanced strategy for integrating ICTs.
- Enhanced strategies are being developed for PNG, Vietnam, Laos, China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Philippines and the South Pacific.
- AusAID is a founding member of the Development Gateway Foundation. The Development Gateway Foundation is a not-for-profit organization currently based in Washington DC. Its objectives are to reduce poverty and support sustainable development through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT).
- AusAID is fully funding a Development Gateway Portal, the first OECD country to do so.