

**ACACIA PHASE II**



**AN IDRC  
PROGRAM INITIATIVE  
FOR AFRICA**

**PROSPECTUS  
2001-2005**

**<http://www.idrc.ca/acacia>**

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**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION  
TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

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## INTRODUCTION

The 1996 Information Society and Development (ISAD) conference in South Africa introduced the African development community to the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and served as a launching pad for the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), a framework for using ICTs in Africa to accelerate economic and social development). Acacia represented Canada's contribution to the AISI. It had three goals:

- Goal #1:** To **demonstrate** that the benefits of ICTs can reach disadvantaged sub-Saharan communities, and the women and youth within these communities, and can amplify their inherent innovativeness and enterprise to help these communities solve their development problems.
- Goal #2:** To **learn** from Acacia's community-based research and experimentation and to disseminate this knowledge widely.
- Goal #3:** To **build** international momentum and buy-in [in] order to continue expansion of access to ICTs by rural and disadvantaged groups.

## ACACIA I: The First Generation

In its first four years, Acacia I invested \$22.2 million (CAD) in the development of ICTs in Africa. National Acacia Advisory Committees (NAACs) were established in these countries to help define the lessons being learned from the program and to make sure that decision-making was rooted in local realities. The Acacia program included social investments in pilot multi-purpose community telecentres, school networking activities and accelerated ICT policy development initiatives in each Acacia country, as well as considerable investments in evaluation and related research.

**ELSA** – the Evaluation and Learning System for Acacia – was seen as a powerful means to shift evaluation practices away from policing towards wider participation and greater sharing and learning. Three studies were undertaken: (i) School Networking in Africa; (ii) Telecentres; and (iii) ICTs in Community Development in Africa.

**NAACs** Through the National Acacia Advisory Committees, another signature approach, Acacia achieved high-level visibility within national ICT discourses that would have been impossible through conventional research methods.

# ACACIA II

## THE VISION

Africa will actively contribute to and benefit from the global knowledge economy, and ICTs will appear on the policy agenda of all African countries as a means to raise and improve living standards for all (including rural as well as urban dwellers, women, men, children, youth and the disabled populations).

## THE MISSION

- Continued application and related research endeavours of ICTs directly in communities and circumstances of poverty in Africa.
- Continued support to applied research that fosters pro-poor ICT-based policies within the original Acacia country partners, with gradual expansion of these activities into regional pilot programming in Southern, West, East and North Africa.
- Fostering of ICT applied research in appropriate technologies and related policy formations that favour the development of cost-accessible and functionally relevant technical solutions within the African context.

## OBJECTIVES

- To enhance understanding and knowledge of the innovative, transformative or dysfunctional effects of ICTs in poverty reduction and human development in Africa.
- To improve African countries' capacities to formulate and implement national ICT policies that promote equitable access to ICTs and information for socio-economic development.
- To contribute to research in appropriate ICTs that support development and adoption of affordable and functionally relevant technical solutions for Africa.
- To support research that increases African content on ICTs through software development for effective application of ICTs for development.
- To learn from Acacia's community-based research and experimentation and to disseminate this knowledge widely.

# PROGRAMMING

Acacia II will operate in 14 African countries (compared to four during Acacia I) between 2001 and 2005. Whereas Acacia I was organised as a pilot and semi-autonomous program, Acacia II will function as an integrated program, maintaining close links with similar IDRC initiatives, such as PAN Americas, PAN Asia and Bellanet.

## PROGRAMMING FRAMEWORK

**ICT Policy Research** Acacia will support applied research that fosters pro-poor policies and promotes equitable access to ICTs and information. It will strive to link research results to ICT policy and policy-making.

**Technology Research and Development** Acacia will support research into practical models for affordable and functionally relevant technical solutions.

**Knowledge generation for enhanced ICT appropriation** Acacia will increase African content in ICTs by supporting research into the development of Internet tools that focus on information pertinent to the South.

## DIRECTION

### Poverty reduction and people development

Economic and social indicators are increasingly bleak in Africa, and major efforts must be made to reverse the continent's economic marginalisation. Acacia II is founded on the idea that, if the transformational power of information and communication technologies can be brought to bear, the continent can participate in the Information Economy.

## VEHICLES

### Partnerships and networks

Partnerships and networks are vehicles for achieving poverty reduction through people development. Acacia II will engage in inter-agency, public-private and North-South partnerships. It will work with regional post-secondary institutions, early adopters of technologies and partner institutions to develop the sustainable research capacity.

## OUTCOMES

### Social-economic opportunities and learning and development

Acacia II will work with partners to identify new information-based social and economic opportunities for people (especially women), communities, nations and the region. As well, opportunities offered by ICT-induced changes are expected to open up new avenues for study and research. Acacia II will also continue to stimulate learning for a broad spectrum of learners in order to guarantee the development of people, projects, ideas, products and technologies in the service of the continent.