

Information Systems Strategy Plan (ISSP)

The Eritrea Early Child Development Project is introducing an innovative feature in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT) and knowledge management to support project activities at different levels. With a regional Information Systems Strategy Plan (ISSP), it undertakes to capture and disseminate indigenous knowledge. As part of this initiative, it proposes to set up a framework for the identification, collection, and dissemination of indigenous knowledge on issues relating to ECD. The addition of the indigenous knowledge component is expected to enhance the culture of knowledge sharing and add a unique feature to the in-country knowledge repository created through IMPACT. For the Fiscal Year 2001, the project has been awarded US\$20,000 from the Africa Region Operational Quality and Knowledge (AFTQK) as seed money.

As one of the first steps toward the collection, processing, storage, and dissemination of information and knowledge, the Eritrea ECD project is developing an integrated strategic systems plan that will define the long-term information requirements; recommend a framework and architecture for collecting, processing, and disseminating information and knowledge; and prepare a long-term system implementation plan. The ISSP will become the guiding document that investigates business requirements for the Eritrea ECD delivery and services sector and addresses the information technology architecture, hardware, software, and connectivity issues pertinent to ECD delivery and services in the short and long term. It will build the foundation upon which Eritrea's ECD information systems will develop in an integrated, orderly manner to support key sectoral and institutional priorities.

The expected outputs from this effort are:

- Creation of an information and knowledge-sharing model for ECD projects that can be used in similar projects in the Africa Region
- A framework along with requisite policies for the identification, collection, storage, and dissemination of indigenous knowledge related to ECD activities
- Production of an integrated systems strategy plan and manual
- Advice on and enhancement of tools for monitoring and evaluation for ECD programs
- Guidance on the design and development of an integrated information architecture
- Fostering of a knowledge-sharing culture among all ECD actors and ministries
- Workshop on knowledge sharing and information access and advantages
- Integration of information from IMPACT and other regional and institutional information sources
- Production of a "good practice" example on mainstreaming knowledge in ECD initiatives.

The ISSP will be developed based on a long-term information technology strategy study to identify the medium-term and long-term information needs of the Eritrea

ECD project and to establish a technical set of standards that all proposed solutions must adhere to. The study will:

- Address the technical issues of wide-area networking in light of the communication needs.
- Consider the use of intranet technologies to develop a plan of action ensuring compatibility of various electronic systems.
- Examine the development and maintenance of links with partner agencies.
- Establish an efficient information and document system using computer networking facilities. Assess the current situation of the ECD project's information systems (in all associated ministries and agencies, in Asmara and in the regions), including hardware and software use, organization, resources, staff skills, training requirements, status of current application systems, and ongoing development activities.
- Diagnose data and information necessary to carry out the major functional processes of the ECD project and related institutions and agencies.
- Formulate (or revise) major information system policies on matters such as responsibility for data administration, budgeting and accounting principles for information resources, responsibilities of functional managers and data-processing department, and security standards for data and systems.
- Design a system architecture that defines standards for databases, information flows, and information systems; a technology and networking architecture that guides future procurement, maintenance, and operation; and a standard set of core applications for common business functions.
- Help to prepare detailed plans for technology acquisition, system development, staff training, and system deployment with the respective investment and operating cost estimates for information systems during a five-year period.

The result will be a draft action plan for the implementation of the information technology strategy and a systems implementation plan that will specify the precedence of activities, the cost, the project management arrangements, the project milestones, and the proposed indicators of completion of all system development activities. The entire process will be guided by an information systems committee of the Eritrea ECD project and associated agencies that will be responsible for the sponsorship, supervision, and approval of the ISSP. This committee will be formed with senior staff from all user departments of the respective agencies to provide input and to sponsor and monitor the ISSP.

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