African Use of Information and Communication Technologies

The Acacia Initiative is an international effort led by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to empower sub-Saharan African communities with the ability to apply information and communication technologies (ICT) to their own social and economic development. By using these technologies to their own ends, disadvantaged communities in Africa may be able to shift some of the decision making away from metropolitan centres and international development organizations toward the places where development challenges are faced most acutely.

One key partnership is with the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), which unites African governments and donors in a framework to extend the use of information, communication, and related technologies for development. Led by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, AISI provides a uniquely African perspective on the opportunities and challenges of that continent in an emerging information age.

Acacia will work mainly with rural and disadvantaged communities, particularly their women and youth groups. These communities are often isolated from ICT networks yet demonstrate enormous creativity and enterprise living in an environment with little in the way of services and information. With Acacia, IDRC intends to support this creativity and enterprise by demonstrating the benefits of a local capacity to use information and communication in solving local development problems.

- offers training in information management strategy and tools to English-speaking government decision makers in developing countries through its Strategic Information Management Program

- developed and currently manages three capacity-development Web sites for the International Association of Impact Assessment used by developing countries.

Canada has ministerial memoranda of understanding (MOU) with many countries. These MOUs establish a framework under which collaborative projects can be undertaken in the areas of environmental management policies, approaches, and tools; environmental pollution prevention and control approaches; development of national science capacity; conservation and sustainable resource management policies, practices, and technology transfer and solutions; and exchange of information on a range of environmental issues. Canada also has arrangements for technical cooperation with many countries.