

**SELECTED ISSUES ARISING FROM THE FIRST SESSION OF THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON POVERTY REDUCTION PRACTICES**

(Item 6 of the provisional agenda)

**REVIEW OF SELECTED ISSUES ARISING FROM POVERTY
REDUCTION PRACTICES**

**IV. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR RURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

22. Information and communication technology (ICT) has been identified as another component of the work of ESCAP on poverty reduction. Poor women and men are often excluded from the benefits of ICT and cannot benefit from the opportunities that these technologies offer in terms of income, access to services or participation in public affairs. Among the poor, rural poor are especially disadvantaged because of low connectivity and literacy rates. In order to overcome these disadvantages, community telecentres are being established in many countries, but only a few of them have proved able to provide sustained benefits for the community.

23. The Government of Malaysia and its partners have successfully implemented rural community ICT service projects in various parts of the country. The projects include the IT community centres of the Selangor State Government covering over 60 locations, and the e-Bario project servicing a remote community in Serawak, as well as several others in various stages of development. Together, they represent a substantial body of experience from which good practices can be drawn and lessons learned.

24. However, many of these experiences have not been extensively documented, synthesized or shared in the region as a basis for capacity development for other countries. The project on capacity development for effective design and delivery of rural community ICT services seeks to improve the success rate and positive impact of rural community ICT services in the region through the analysis, documentation and dissemination of the Malaysian experience. The project, financed by ESCAP and the Government of Malaysia, is currently under implementation.

25. Three practices have already been selected and are in the process of being documented: InfoDesa, Rural Internet Programme and e-Bario. The first two are broad government programmes for the establishment of community telecentres. The last one is a specific intervention to connect a very remote community via satellite. The experience with these three government initiatives will be supplemented by the documentation of community-based rural telecentres. ESCAP is compiling these case studies and developing a guidebook from which the major lessons from the case studies will be extracted.

26. ESCAP has partnered with the National Institute of Public Administration of Malaysia (INTAN) to develop a guidebook that will analyse the main lessons learned from the Malaysian experience. The guidebook will be based on a number of interesting case studies drawn from the experience with rural telecentre in Malaysia.

27. Documentation of the experiences is undertaken by INTAN and partner institutions in Malaysia following guidelines developed by ESCAP. The guidelines consist of a set of questions to the person undertaking the documentation so that no important aspect of the analysis is left out. The guidelines pay specific attention to the participation of stakeholders in designing and managing the centres, to the sustainability of the practice, to the potential for replication of the experience in another context, and to the policy issues that surround the practice.