

Assessment of Comparative Advantages of Swedish ICT Support in Tanzania

Alan Greenberg

Department for Africa

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Sida Evaluation 07/47

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	5
1.1 Background.....	5
1.2 Swedish Support of ICT in Tanzania	5
1.3 Purpose of Assessment	7
1.4 Assessment Methodology	7
2. ICT and ICT4D	8
2.1 State of ICT in Tanzania	8
2.2 ICT4D	10
2.3 ICT4D in a Sida, Paris Declaration World	10
2.4 ICT4D in Tanzania.....	12
3. Sweden as an ICT Donor	13
3.1 Assessment of Past Activities	13
3.2 Comparative Advantages.....	14
3.3 ICT4D and Sweden’s New Development Cooperation Policy	15
3.4 Stakeholder Perceptions.....	15
3.5 Government Demand.....	15
4. The Way Forward	18
4.1 Will the Government of Tanzania Drive ICT4D?.....	18
4.2 Swedish Position if not Demand-Driven	18
4.3 Alternatives to a Resident ICT Advisor	19
4.4 Recommendation	19
Appendix 1. Abbreviations and Acronyms	20
Appendix 2. Interview Subjects	21
Appendix 3. Terms of Reference	22

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Executive Summary

Background: Sweden has a long history of supporting Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in Tanzania. In 2002, Sweden instituted a formal program to support the innovative uses of ICTs in development cooperation in Tanzania, and a resident ICT Advisor was appointed for the period 2002–2006. Effective in 2006, the position was widened to be a regional ICT Advisor, removing some focus from Tanzania. A year later, a decision was taken to eliminate the position in 2008. Although taken primarily for financial reasons, the decision went along with the intent to withdraw from ICT for development (ICT4D) as part of the reduction in the number of sectors supported in Tanzania. However, the plan called for a mid-term review of the comparative advantages of Sweden supporting ICT4D in Tanzania. The present assessment is part of that review.

Although not driven by the decision regarding the Tanzania, earlier in 2006, Sida commissioned a study of the overall support of ICT4D in Sida. That study was completed in mid-2007 and ultimately the Sida Management Group decided that pending an overall reorganization within Sida, there were comparative advantages of Sida supporting ICT4D, and such support would continue. In August 2007, the Swedish Government unveiled its new Development Cooperation Policy. This policy reduced the number of countries supported (Tanzania would continue) and put an emphasis on ensuring that Swedish development cooperation funding would result in effective and efficient support. The new policy was silent on ICT and ICT4D.

Tanzania and ICTs: Tanzania is among the poorest countries in the world. Its use of technology is limited, but growing. However, the uses are typically to address classical financial and management issues and not typically to support the areas that Swedish development cooperation normally emphasizes. Tanzania has documented where it wants the country to be in 2025 and this includes a significant focus on ICTs. It has also adopted a National ICT Policy (the policy development process funded by Sweden). However, neither of these has really effected major change related to ICTs.

ICT4D and Swedish Development Cooperation: Current development cooperation modalities increasingly favour general budget support and sectoral plan support over projects. ICT4D has often been viewed as a sector in its own right, as opposed to a cross-cutting sector or simply an enabler for effective support in other sectors. Moreover, donors are increasingly expected to work in harmonized donor groups instead of independently. Given that very few other countries have a focused interest in supporting ICT4D, and that the government of Tanzania has not clearly requested such support, it is difficult for Sweden to pursue this focus. More pointedly, the new support modalities presume strategic dialogues, and such dialogues, particularly with regard to ICT4D, are not common.

That notwithstanding, Sweden as a country excels in ICTs, and Sweden is one of very few countries that has focused on using ICTs to address development issues such as poverty and education. Moreover, it is clear that the resolution of some of the harder poverty-related issues will require ICT interventions.

Future Directions: If Sweden is to continue to support ICT4D in Tanzania in the long term, it must be in response to clear government interest. Although there are few people in positions of authority in the government who truly comprehend the benefits of using ICTs to address non-traditional problems, there are other well-placed champions of ICT4D in the country. There is some belief that it will be possible to mobilize government support.

If such support does materialize in a believable way in the near future, Sweden should continue to support and advocate the uses of ICT to support its long-term development cooperation goals in Tanzania.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Swedish support of ICT in development cooperation with Tanzania has a long history, including infrastructure support to the expansion of the fixed telecommunication network, institution building when the telecom regulation authority was established, support of ICT at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), and the formal Embassy-based ICT programme which was started in 2002. A Programme Officer was recruited to identify strategic areas of cooperation in the ICT field and to establish relations and supporting activities. The programme started with a diverse portfolio of supporting activities, mainly directed towards sector support related to the telecom regulator and the ministry responsible for that area, rural development and ICT in education. To align the ICT support to the Tanzanian Government poverty reduction strategy, the Mkukuta¹, the ICT support was consolidated to two main programmes, ICT for Rural Development and ICT for education.

In the Swedish strategy for development cooperation with Tanzania – 2006–2010, the institutional support to ICT for development was identified as a phase out sector. The cooperation strategy also states that “the ongoing effort of supporting ICT integration in the education sector should be gradually aligned with the general budget allocation to education. Sweden’s comparative advantages as a donor in the ICT field will be assessed in the mid-term review of the strategy”.

In support of this mid-term review process, a decision was taken to perform an assessment of the ICT support from Sida/Swedish Embassy and other donors’ efforts in the ICT field. This assessment was to include an impact analysis of both the continuation and withdrawal of explicit ICT support.

In September 2007, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs unveiled its new development cooperation policy. It includes a reduction in the number of countries supported, a reiteration of the need to reduce the number of sectors supported and to move towards increasing support of the Paris declaration. Poverty reduction in Africa will be a major focus. A core value is that Swedish support should “make a difference”.

1.2 Swedish Support of ICT in Tanzania

Sida supports the integration of ICT in developing countries in order to improve communications and the exchange of information. Sida’s policy is outlined in the document “Strategy and Action Plan for ICT in Development Cooperation”². The role of ICT4D is also described in Sida’s report “ICTs for Poverty Alleviation”³.

Sida has identified ICT as an important tool for development. In March 2007, Sida commissioned a study to primarily serve as background material and input for the discussion at Sida’s management group related to how the future integration of ICT in Swedish development cooperation should be designed and organized. The study was recently presented to Sida management and the findings will also be used in the present assessment.

Sida is the only donor in Tanzania with a specific programme for ICT at present. Other donors such as the UNDP and USAID have previously worked with ICT support, but such activities are quite low-key now. There are ongoing World Bank projects in direct support of some government operations.

¹ MKUKUTA is a Kiswahili acronym for the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty.

² Sida publication Sida4474en, http://www.Sida.se/shared/jsp/download.jsp?f=Sida4474en_Strategy+for+ICT_web.pdf&a=3404

³ Sida publication Sida4937en, <http://www.eldis.org/fulltext/Sidaictpoverty.pdf>

However, ICT is increasingly used by government agencies, institutions and organisations in Tanzania and the importance of strategic interventions for ICT implementation to reach best results for the investments made is increasing. There are many examples of institutions utilizing ICT components without the ability to properly integrate the tool into the operations. Moreover, it was reported that there is a distinct lack of appreciation for the benefits possible from the strategic use of ICT in non-traditional ICT areas including healthcare and justice.

1.2.1 ICT activities

Sweden has supported a very wide range of activities. Many projects were relatively small, were designed to provide seed funds for specific activities, or to initiate discussions and awareness.

Although moderately small, some of these projects have the potential for creating significant change. A prime example is the funding of a project to have office productivity software (word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software) operate in Kiswahili, thus opening up its use to large numbers of people who are not sufficiently familiar with English. Another example is the funding of TanEdu, a small NGO focussing on education. TanEdu decided to post publicly available examination results on the web, allowing easy access without line ups or delays within Tanzania, and access from outside of the country as well. The program was so successful that the Ministry of Education ultimately decided to post results themselves. It is generally acknowledged that the Ministry would not likely have done this without TanEdu's early initiative. Although this occurred prior to Sida's involvement with them, it shows how small well thought-out initiatives can have impact far in excess of the funding level.

There have been several major initiatives as well.

SAREC ICT Support at the University of Dar es Salaam: Prior to Sida involvement, UDSM had written an ICT Policy and Master Plan with the help of the Dutch. The high priority parts of the plan included a basic campus network, administrative computing systems and Internet connectivity which were implemented with Nuffic support. Although the main targeted users were administrators, by 1999, there was some use by researchers, instructors and students. It was clear that for those privileged few who had access to the network and the Internet, there were significant benefits including an increase in publications, online research, collaborative research and use of e-mail. SAREC (Sida's department for research collaboration), a long term supporter of UDSM, helped the university enhance its inter- and intra-campus network, increase Internet connectivity, provide LANs and computers, train ICT staff and general users, provide infrastructure and content for pedagogical use of ICT, and provide post-graduate ICT training to enhance ICT research capacity. The current project is scheduled to end in 2008.

National ICT Policy: Just as a formal ICT policy was a prerequisite for effective ICT progress at UDSM, an ICT Policy was similarly needed by the country itself. Sida funded the activities of a Task Force charged with creating such a policy. The Task Force was formed in August 2001 and the resultant National ICT Policy was approved by Cabinet in March 2003.

ICT Support for Teacher Colleges: There is a world-wide belief that there is a benefit to using computers and Internet connectivity in schools, and particularly in secondary schools. There had been a few isolated attempts to do this in Tanzania, but there are very significant challenges to carrying out such a programme. Experience throughout the developed and developing world has proven that simple provision of equipment and connectivity is not sufficient. There must be a plan on how to use the new technologies and there must be willing and trained staff to support them, both technically and pedagogically. Sida and the Ministry of Education developed an innovative way to start the exercise – create an infrastructure in which teacher colleges could train teachers in the use of ICTs, both how to use them as users, and how to integrate them into the school environment. Although a far smaller task than trying to get ICTs to all secondary schools, it was still a large task, given the lack of prior ICT use and the number of colleges involved. Moreover, it was a crucial step in ultimately integrating the use of technology in secondary schools. The project is ongoing.

1.3 Purpose of Assessment

The assessment had a number of goals:

- Investigate the comparative advantages of Sweden as an ICT-oriented donor to the development of the ICT sector in Tanzania.
- Investigate the comparative advantages of Sweden as a development cooperation partner with a focus using ICT as a cross-cutting tool to help meet the countries development targets.
- Recommend to what extent, if any, Sweden should continue to focus on ICT in Tanzania, and if it is to continue, how this should be structured.

1.4 Assessment Methodology

The assessor had over forty years of experience in all aspects of the use of ICTs. Moreover, he has worked closely with Sida for over five years, had studied the use of ICTs in development cooperation and poverty reduction. Most recently, he had performed an evaluation of the overall support of ICTs by Sida. This assessment draws heavily on the study and its report: Study of ICT for Development at Sida. That report is available from the author of this assessment and may be on the Sida web site shortly.

A nine working day site visit to Dar es Salaam took place in August 2007. Meetings were held with key stakeholders from the Government of Tanzania, other donors and the education sector as well as with senior Embassy of Sweden personnel. Although the number of interviews was limited based on the timing of the site visit as well as scheduling constraints, a wide and inclusive group of stakeholders were interviewed.

A number of documents related to the use of ICT in Tanzania were received and reviewed.

Although the conclusions of this assessment are no doubt subjective, they were based on patterns identified in multiple interviews.

2. ICT and ICT4D

Information and Communications Technology is a broad subject. A useful working definition of ICT is “electronic means of capturing, processing, storing and disseminating information”.

Despite the wide availability and use of technology in the developed world and despite falling unit costs in many areas, good technology implementations are often difficult and costly. Although the outcomes are rarely announced as such, many projects fail and many that are successful far exceed their original budgets and implementation timelines.

To further increase the challenge, ICTs tend to evolve and change very quickly. It is difficult to keep up with changes in any particular area, and it is virtually impossible to be aware of changes covering the entire ICT spectrum. Best practices can be useful, but are often not available or difficult to adapt to local needs if they are.

Given these general characteristics, in developing countries where funds and skills are often in short supply, it is unlikely that the overall track record will be significantly better. Moreover, as technology is pushed out to those with few ICT skills, one must overcome the normal fear of the unknown and timidity that goes along with first-time users.

Nevertheless, technologies are an integral, unavoidable and beneficial part of life in the industrialized world. ICTs are the enablers that allow modern health care, banking, trade and communications to exist. If developing countries are to play a role in the global economy and to address their poverty-related problems, they too must have access to modern technologies.

In the context of this assessment, ICT for Development (ICT4D) is the use of ICT as a tool and enabler in support of other development activities. Although there may be occasional exceptions, it is not direct support of the ICT sector with the country. It can include support of major ICT systems within government (such as finance), but the primary focus is the use of technology to support non-technology goals. Classic examples are the use of technology to enable better education, health care and justice systems.

2.1 State of ICT in Tanzania

2.1.1 Overall situation

Tanzania is one of the world’s poorest countries, but from a business and government operations perspective, ICT is thriving. To be sure, there are significant problems:

- There is a shortage of ICT-skilled people in Dar es Salaam and most particularly in rural areas.
- Imported equipment costs are high compared to local goods (as are automobiles and other imported goods).
- External Internet connectivity is painfully expensive due to the lack of competitive terrestrial links.
- Internal communications are expensive due to the lack of competitive fibre-based communications. Even when fibre exists, it has often been underused.

Nevertheless, there are a number of very positive signs:

- The telecommunications regulator is both enlightened and effective. This gives Tanzania a boost compared to most developing countries (and some developed countries). Sweden deserves a significant part of the credit for the current state of regulation in Tanzania, as it provided early support and advice to the regulator.

- There is a thriving, competitive mobile telephone business with low prices and reasonable quality of service. Based on a Sida-commissioned economic study, Ericsson decided to begin a pilot project which has the possibility of building, improving or decreasing the costs of mobile telephone access in rural areas.
- Selected universities are increasingly graduating ICT-literate students. Again, Sida can take credit for at least part of this based on SAREC's early support of UDSM.
- An association of ICT professionals is being formed with the targets which should help increase the ability to use ICTs effectively.
- There is a core group of well-connected ICT champions.

2.1.2 ICT focal points

In most developing countries, government, finance-related industry and telecommunications are the users driving the use of technology. This is clearly the case in Tanzania as well. Unfortunately, the uses of technology in the public sector are largely restricted to "traditional" applications such as finance, taxation and administrative streamlining. Moreover, technologies are implemented on a piecemeal basis with little or no coordination between government ministries, or even within a ministry.

Thanks to the ICT initiatives at UDSM, other post-secondary institutions, particularly in Dar es Salaam, are starting to integrate ICT into their infrastructure and curriculum. Although Sweden has been instrumental in some of these initiatives, there are occasional other donors involved as well. But guidance and financial support is badly needed for the other institutions to ensure that all post-secondary graduates in Tanzania have been introduced to ICTs.

The situation with universities is replicated in the rest of society. Within Dar es Salaam, there are regular reminders that this is the 21st century. In rural areas, mobile telephony is flourishing, but there are few other such reminders. Sweden is sponsoring one project involving the Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology (DIT), the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) and the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) looking at opportunities for sustainable broad-band-oriented uses of technology in rural areas⁴. There need to be more such projects oriented towards practical, sustainable and beneficial uses of ICTs in rural areas. An important goal is increased ICT awareness within local government.

The Tanzania Development Vision 2025 is the document which describes how Tanzania should evolve over the coming decades. It includes the statement:

Advanced micro-electronic information and communication technologies (ICTs) are central to competitive social and economic transformation. ICT costs are continuing to fall while their capabilities and resultant profitability enhancements are increasing.

These technologies are a major driving force for the realization of Vision. They should be harnessed persistently in all sectors of the economy and should be put to benefit of all social groups with a view to enabling the meeting of basic needs of the people, increasing productivity and promoting competitiveness.

The new opportunities which the ICTs are opening up can be harnessed to meet the goals of the Vision. However, appropriate skills and capabilities would have to be put in place. This task demands that adequate investments are made to improve the quality of science based education and to create a knowledge society generally.

The vision has driven some activities, such as the creation of the National ICT Policy, but at the moment, it remains just a vision without sufficient mobilization to allow it to become a reality. In part, the idea captured by "*They should be harnessed persistently in all sectors of the economy...*" needs to become a reality.

⁴ One source of the broadband communications is installed but largely unused fibre-optic cables in Tanzania.

2.2 ICT4D

In the context of this assessment, the term “ICT for Development” implies that the ICTs are being used to accomplish some other development-related end. They may be optional or mandatory to accomplish that end, but ICTs are not the reason for taking on the project. Similarly, ICT4D is not primarily aimed at directly strengthening the ICT private sector within a country, although there will undoubtedly be some benefits.

For example, we are not looking at building telecommunications infrastructure throughout the country, but if the government implements a communications backbone for the use of its various ministries, ICT4D projects can both reduce long-term costs and increase effectiveness.

A prime example of ICT4D is the support of education to allow the country’s resources to be more effectively used and managed. Similarly, an excellent example is the creation of a health information network to allow communications between health centres and to support timely and relevant health decision making. In both cases, the ICTs are not directly involved in delivering the services (teaching or health care), but in supporting the infrastructure to allow the services to be delivered.

Another classic example is the use of communications of all forms (radio, mobile telephones, the Internet) to support communications between government and citizens, helping to increase transparency, and to provide access to information and services.

Public finance management is clearly a use of ICT which is important. It is less clear if Sweden should be a lead player in this particular field, given the vast resources needed and the specific interest of other agencies such as the World Bank. However, Sweden has been active in support of specific central government functions⁵ as well as public finance management on the local level. There are no doubt other niche areas where Swedish support can be particularly effective.

ICT is not a magic solution to poverty or any of the symptoms of poverty. And the “Digital Divide” is not a problem in its own right, but rather one of the symptoms of a poor and largely uneducated country with people who often do not speak the language of the Internet. But it is increasingly clear that some aspects of poverty are not going to be addressed without the critical use of ICT.

Unfortunately, very few donor agencies have significant staff who are trained in both development issues and in how to effectively use ICT to address these development problems in innovative ways.

2.3 ICT4D in a Sida, Paris Declaration World

2.3.1 Development cooperation modalities

In earlier years, donors and their developing country partners could investigate interesting support scenarios without any real constraints other than the interests of the two parties. While that could be extremely effective at times, it could also lead to partner countries “shopping around” for donors who might be willing to fund some project, and to competition between donors where it was common to have multiple donors funding competing, non-complementary projects. There is no doubt that some of this still happens, but there is increasing pressure on both donors and partner countries to ensure that resources are used effectively and that high-priority needs are addressed before more discretionary ones.

Moreover, donor governments and agencies are interested in more efficient use of their resources. And donors believe that developing countries must take responsibility and for their own future.

This has led to a number of initiatives:

⁵ In particular, Sweden has supported the National Audit Office – a key agency from the point of view of good, transparent government and also for ensuring that Tanzania can meet donor’s requirements for effective financial management.

- Assuming the partner country has sufficient fiscal controls, development cooperation should increasingly be in the form of general budget support.
- In cases where that is not implementable, financial support should increasingly be in the form of contributions supporting sector plans, either unrestricted or restricted to specific projects.
- Donors should work together, harmonizing their activities, typically with one donor playing a lead role in any given sector. In the case of Sweden, this is often in cooperation with the Nordic Plus Group of donors⁶.
- Sweden should support just three sectors in any country.

All of these initiatives rely on their being substantive strategic dialogues between all of the players.

Some of the development cooperation initiatives can make ICT4D support difficult. Specifically, in situations where:

ICT4D is not prominent in the partner country's plans: In a development cooperation world driven mainly by the partner country's budgets and plans, a donor that has a focus on ICT4D has few options if ICT4D does not play a significant role in budgets and plans.

Other donors have little interest in ICT4D: Working together with other donors is a good concept. But it breaks down when one donor has a particular interest or expertise that is not shared by the other donors. As noted, there is very little interest in ICT4D amongst other donors in Tanzania, and particularly amongst the donors that Sweden often works with.

If only three sectors can be supported, will ICT4D be included: Many donors traditionally treat ICT as a sector. In fact, it is a sector from the perspective of carrying on ICT-related business in the country. However, ICT4D is not a sector. It is a cross-cutting tool which can support other sectors, and it is important that it be viewed as such. A reasonable analogy is to economics. A country such as Sweden or Tanzania may have people who are employed as economists. Thus one can think of Economics as being a (rather small) sector. An embassy may have an economist on its staff, but no one would count Economics as one of the three supported sectors.

2.3.2 How to best leverage the new modalities

Some of the people interviewed were far more candid than others regarding how effective the current donor-government interactions and funding modalities are. Two examples will paint a good picture⁷.

Senior government official:

Officially we want general budget support (GBS) and sectoral plan support. Candidly, many ICT projects will never be sufficiently high priority to be included in these plans or budgets, and funded projects are the only way they will get done. For pilot projects, project funding has merits over GBS.

Donor:

Strategic dialogues, if they occur at all, are not strategic. Discussions, particularly at a technical level, do not really seem to happen. Perhaps they don't want people telling them what to do.

Before, funds would not be released without some level of dialogue. GBS has changed this dynamic.

The first comment echoes the experience with the teacher education project. It is very unlikely that such a project would have ever risen to be a high priority within the Ministry of Education if they had to fund it (including the associated foreign advisors) purely on government budgets. But once it was started based on donor project funds, it may well receive ongoing government support.

⁶ The Nordic Plus Group of donors includes Denmark, Finland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and UK.

⁷ These are not verbatim quotations, but accurately give the gist of the discussion.

The second comment is central to the whole ICT4D situation. There are very few people in the government who understand the concept of ICT4D, and even fewer who are senior enough to do something about it. And despite the rhetoric surrounding strategic dialogue, there is very little of it happening, and thus little opportunity to change this situation.

The implication of these comments is that for the next while, projects may be required for effective ICT4D activities, while at the same time, working at senior levels to convince the government of the wisdom of using ICTs effectively in all sectors.

2.4 ICT4D in Tanzania

The current situation of ICT4D in Tanzania is not particularly positive. People are quick to express appreciation for the benefits of using ICT to support activities in education, health, government administration and many other areas. But there is little initiative to actually pursue them. It seems to take an immense amount of effort by both Tanzanians who truly understand, and by donors, to push through small victories. Part of this is cultural. A number of the subjects interviewed felt that it was quite acceptable and expected that one must be patient and fight for each small gain – there is seemingly no expectation that the government will take the initiative and start driving ICT-based projects on a more global scale. Luckily, there are some people who do not agree.

The current initiative to equip all secondary schools with computers and technology-literate teachers is a good example. It is difficult to imagine this having happened without Swedish long-term determination to raise awareness within the Ministry⁸. And of course, once a decision was taken, Swedish funding has been important. Although there are promises of continued government funding of this initiative, some people close to the situation are dubious how well the project will fare once the Sida money runs out.

The National ICT Policy is another good example. It was approved in 2003. A few small aspects of this plan have been pursued, particularly the e-Gov initiative, which is aimed mainly at the internal use of ICT within the government. But little else has happened, and it is unclear whether that will change in the foreseeable future. This will be discussed further in section 3.5.

ICT is mentioned in Tanzania's Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Mkukuta, but the references are not particularly strong. It is better than the previous version, but not sufficient to drive implementations without champions within the various ministries – and they do not generally exist.

It would seem that the origin of all of these problems is that there are few people in Tanzania who truly understand the power of properly used ICTs to address non-ICT issues and are in positions of sufficient authority to make it happen. Statements such as “People who can comprehend the implications of ICT4D are very few” and “Core business and business policy understanding and ICT understanding simply don't meet – there is a complete disconnect.” were repeatedly heard in interviews.

One should not infer from the preceding discussion that nothing is happening. That is not so. There are a number of encouraging initiatives using ICT in innovative ways to address some problems, even in areas such as the justice system and healthcare. But where they exist, they tend to be isolated and often driven by external agencies. There is no driving force within the government. In various public events, the President and Vice-President have talked forcefully about how ICT is crucial to Tanzania's future. But these sentiments are not seemingly reflected in actions nor do they appear in requests made to donors.

⁸ Raising awareness was a multi-faceted endeavour including workshops, explicit training and site visits to locations where the concepts could be seen in action.

3. Sweden as an ICT Donor

In November 2005, Sweden addressed the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society. In part, the statement read:

We see the use of ICT as a major dynamic force in our society and in the economy. We believe that information and communications technology (ICT) has the potential to be an effective instrument for democratization and poverty reduction in all societies, regardless of cultural diversity and level of development. We must therefore invest in education, research and infrastructure. Today, sophisticated ICT solutions are deeply integrated into Sweden's traditional industrial, public and service sectors. Our long tradition of engineering and innovation has given us both an excellent telecommunications system and a cutting-edge ICT industry.

ICTs are unique in that they cut across all economic and social sectors. ICT can catalyze new types of development, promote a more effective use of development resources and foster accountability, transparency and interaction with citizens.

Developing countries should be able to utilize the potential of ICT to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. ICT can empower people and ultimately strengthen human rights, not least by promoting freedom of expression and a free flow of information. Both old and new ICT services can address traditional development challenges. Governments should invest in physical infrastructure of the public administration not only to improve service delivery but also to reduce opportunities for mismanagement of public resources. Such investments will improve the speed, reliability, accountability and transparency of public sector transactions.

Sweden, as one of the leading countries in the field of ICT for development, has the ambition to develop ICT as a strategic area for our development cooperation. Support for ICT in development is included in bilateral development programs with partner countries.

Sweden is one of the few donor countries that has had a continued interest in ICT4D. As an early adopter, Sida has been one of the guiding lights in the ICT4D world. There are a few other countries that have had similar records. They include Switzerland, the UK and Canada. The UK has effectively withdrawn from ICT4D, and curiously, both Switzerland and Canada are not very active in ICT4D in Tanzania.

Within Sida and Swedish Embassies, Tanzania has been rather unique. It is the only country that has had a resident ICT Advisor (2002–2006) and now a Regional ICT Advisor (2006–2008).

3.1 Assessment of Past Activities

In 2002 when the country ICT Advisor was first appointed, things were looking very positive in Tanzania. The National ICT Policy was just being completed, and there was a very optimistic belief that this would lead to the championing of ICT throughout the government. This did not happen.

As a result, although there have been many both small and large successful ICT4D initiatives funded by Sweden, few “kick-started” the ICT4D engine. A notable exception is the support of ICT in teachers colleges. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has taken ownership. As part of this, they developed an ICT Policy for the Ministry, and hopefully will start allocating real budget in support of this policy. The policy was just formally announced in August 2007, so it will be some time before it is clear if the policy is just another paper document, or whether it will result in real action.

With Swedish support, the Telecommunications regulator has helped Tanzania be one of the few African countries with a pragmatic and flexible regulatory environment. This is serving the country well now, and will no doubt continue to help Tanzania in the future.

The largest failure has been the National ICT Policy. It was not a failure in its own right, but four and a half years after the Policy was adopted, there has been little focused action other than in the e-Gov area and more recently in the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. Where there have been other activities which map to ICT Policy targets, it has been the result of local (often hard-won) initiatives and not due to an overall plan driven by the policy.

It is difficult to quantitatively measure the overall success of Sweden's ICT involvement in Tanzania. But the stakeholder perceptions to be discussed in section 3.4 give some measure of the benefits.

3.2 Comparative Advantages

Asking whether there is a “comparative advantage of Sweden as an ICT4D-oriented donor” can have two distinct meanings. It can be asking whether Sweden and Sida have specific advantages or skills to act in this role compared to other donors, or it can be asking whether adding ICT4D to Sweden's portfolio of tools gives some real advantage over not using ICT.

Both questions are important.

3.2.1 Does Sweden have an advantage compared to other donors?

There are three aspects to this question:

- Sweden is one of the most ICT-oriented countries in the world. According to Steve Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft, “Sweden is one of the two or three leading countries in the world when it comes to new technologies. If you're curious about new trends, just come and take a look at Sweden.” Not only does this give Sweden the expertise to work with ICTs, but it gives them the credibility to do it – developing country partners have visited Sweden and know that Sweden demands respect in this domain.
- Sida has been supporting ICT for Development since the 1990s. Although Sida's ICT4D capabilities are not as deep or broad as is desirable, there is some expertise.
- Few other donor countries seem interested in supporting ICT4D. It is unclear whether this is simple lack of real knowledge or a conscious management decision. No doubt either or both are applicable with specific donors. In the late 1990s and into the first years of the 21st century, there were a number of international initiatives such as the United Nations ICT Task Force, the G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force), the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2003 in Geneva, and WSIS II in 2005 in Tunis. All concluded that there were significant benefits to the inclusion of ICT in development. But nevertheless, most donors, and in fact many partner countries, have not taken this to heart.

3.2.2 Are there advantages to Sweden incorporating ICT into its development portfolio?

This is a crucial question. In essence it asks “Do ICTs really help?” There is strong evidence that not only do ICTs help, but they will be essential to addressing many problems associated with poverty reduction and good government. However, since few people understand the subtle uses of technology in addressing development problems, and many of the ICT-oriented solutions are not glitzy ones that capture people's fancy, they are not often included in proposed solutions.

By having people who do understand, Sweden can be one of the few donors helping to effect real solutions.

To drop the focus on ICT4D “allows” a country to ignore the tools that will allow them to address critical development and poverty reduction problems. This is not a paternalistic statement that Sweden or any donor should tell developing countries how to solve their problems, but rather a requirement that Sweden help educate partner countries about the very tools that have allowed Sweden to be a leader in technology.

3.3 ICT4D and Sweden's New Development Cooperation Policy

Sweden's new development cooperation policy is silent with regard to ICT and ICT4D. A new Director General of Sida has recently been named and he will take office at the end of January 2008. It remains to be seen what his viewpoint of ICT4D will be.

Nevertheless, the new policy is not silent on the motivations for it and its expected outcomes. The policy is driven by the desire to focus energies to allow effective and efficient use of Swedish development cooperation money. Sweden is a major contributor to international development agencies including the World Bank and the European Commission. In those efforts, it is working with other nations to effect change. The funding put into bilateral aid has a somewhat different agenda. In these cases, Sweden has specifically identified countries which it thinks merit specific support, and where it thinks that it can make a specific and substantive difference.

With its comparative advantages as outlined in the previous section, the inclusion of ICT4D as a cross-cutting tool can help Sweden be more effective and provide unique services to its developing country partners. Moreover, perhaps the inclusion of ICT4D can be an effective way of changing the old and sometimes rigid structures within Sida and Swedish development cooperation.

3.4 Stakeholder Perceptions

Stakeholders interviewed were uniformly positive in their view of Sweden's ICT4D support to date. That they were dismayed at the possibility of Sweden withdrawing this support is natural – no one wants to give up anything. But the reaction of the few ICT4D champions was somewhat different. These are the people who understand the issues and are trying to effect change within and around the government. They quite understood why Sweden could consider withdrawal. They were equally perturbed at the near vacuum that would be left with so few outside agencies to work with them in their fight. And they well understood that if they are successful in encouraging change in the government view of ICT4D, it may well be too late to alter Sweden's decision.

COSTECH is an organization under the auspices of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. Although they receive core funding from the government, they rely on donors to fund specific projects. They are charged with the overall support of science and technology. As a result, they have been either directly involved or on the periphery of a number of the Swedish-funded initiatives including the development of the National ICT Policy and studies on how ICT can be used in rural development. They are strong supporters of the use of ICT and praised Sweden for its visionary support. Although they clearly understood that progress to date was in very small bits and pieces, they did not have a viable alternative to help increase the government's focus on ICT4D.

Those in higher education took a somewhat different position and appeared convinced that until a true champion was found (or created) at the highest level of government, real progress would not be made.

3.5 Government Demand

To be effective, a resident ICT advisor should not have to preach, but should be able to engage in strategic discussions with those who are already sold on the merits of ICT4D, but need more specific help. That is, the process should be driven by the government and not by the donor. This is certainly happening with regard to many aspects of development cooperation. It is not happening with regard to ICT4D in Tanzania.

3.5.1 Current situation

The 2003 National ICT Policy should have been the catalyst to develop ICT oriented plans throughout the government. In parallel, this would have helped create believers and expertise within the critical ministries. It did not happen.

The ICT Policy at UDSM was critically linked to an implementation plan and included an administrative structure to help guide and police the implementation. There was no such follow-through for the National ICT Policy except in the specific area of e-Gov – the use of technologies in streamlining internal government offices and mechanisms.

At the time the Task Force was developing the National ICT Policy, this issue was well understood. There was some strong support for the creation of an agency or authority within the government to oversee the creation of a plan to implement the Policy. There was a belief that the agency should report at the highest level of government and specifically should report to either the President or Prime Minister. It was felt that only in this way could it effect change throughout the various ministries. If the ICT authority were to reside within an existing ministry, it would likely be less likely to influence what happens in other ministries. This is particularly true if the ICT authority were to reside in one of the “lesser” ministries.

However, by the time the Policy was approved by the government, the section on implementation in the Policy was effectively emasculated. No well-defined plan was created to carry out the Policy, and no high-placed body to oversee implementation was put in place.

Following the adoption of the Policy, Sida commissioned an excellent report entitled “Implementing the ICT Policy of Tanzania” authored by Crister Marking. It was ignored.

At the time the Policy was created, it fell within the purview of the Ministry of Communications and Transport. No institutional framework and no real resources were put into implementing the Policy. And there has been little attempt to coordinate ICT initiatives with the various ministries. The Policy was and remains simply a pretty document.

The Ministry of Communications and Transport was later transformed into the Ministry of Infrastructure Development. When the new government was formed in early 2006, it was reported that Government Notice No.1 assigned “Information Technology Programmes and their Implementations” to the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, and “National Communication and Transport Policies and their Implementation” to the Minister of Infrastructure.

The latter assignment is being honoured, with the communications regulator now coming under the purview of the Minister of Infrastructure Development, and this ministry is in fact, albeit slowly, developing a National ICT Backbone. The Backbone is to serve both the public and private sector. It is unclear when this new backbone will be operational, and to what extent other ministries will actually use it, since many have built or are building their own networks and there has apparently been no effort to curtail this^{9, 10}.

The assignment of the “Information Technology Programmes and their Implementation” to Higher Education, Science and Technology is more problematic. The Ministry of Infrastructure Development still claims responsibility for the Policy, and no one in government seems to refute this. Discussions with

⁹ Some of these networks have been created in parallel with the ongoing effort to create the “official” government network. The logic was that local ministry money was available and their own interests were better served by building a private network fully under their control.

¹⁰ At the time of the assessment in August 2007, the network had been designed, but funding had not yet been identified. There was a preliminary target implementation date of October 2008. Additional details can be found at <http://www.infrastructure.go.tz/publication/NationalOFCBackboneInfrastructure1.pdf>.

several ministries resulted in various interpretations of what Higher Education, Science and Technology is responsible for. Interview subjects (within the government) variously said that Higher Education, Science and Technology were responsible for capacity development (training), or were responsible for content development, or were responsible for ICT Policy and implementation solely within their own ministry. None came anywhere close to the words in the referenced Government Notice.

As previously mentioned, the Ministry of Education and Vocational training has just created a Ministry ICT Policy, is creating an ICT Directorate, and hopefully will follow through on its plan. The e-Gov unit within the President's Office – Public Service Management has done a lot of work. But as part of the overall Public Service Reform Programme, it is largely focused on internal government processes. Few other ministries have created an ICT Policy and it is relatively clear that without documented policies and plans there will be few budget allocations.

Several senior people outside of the government do remember the 2006 Government Notice No. 1 and are attempting to revive it. They are determined that the next 24 months will see a revision of the 2003 policy (which is now rather dated), an act of parliament creating the legal structure to ensure its implementation, and the creation of a highly placed agency or authority to coordinate oversee the policy implementation. How successful they will be is unclear.

3.5.2 Optimal solution

Optimally, the government must take ICT4D to heart. This does not mean vast budget allocations – Tanzania has too many problems and demands on their budget for that. But it does mean that all ministries should start looking at how technology can address problems. Once these ministries have a focal point for the use of technology, there will be opportunities to interact with donors. Sweden is in a strong position to take a lead on these strategic dialogues. Ultimately if there are ICT4D solutions presented in sectoral plans and in the Mkukuta, other donors will have no choice but to support them as well.

To do this, the government must go back to the original concept and create a highly-placed authority or agency to oversee the National ICT Policy. Given the five years since the policy was written, it no doubt needs to be updated, but this need not be a time-consuming effort. Once the authority is in place, a pragmatic plan can be created, and in parallel, substantive donor dialogues can be held. As mentioned above, there is a new initiative among some well-placed people in Tanzania who believe that it is not too late, and that just such a scenario can unfold.

4. The Way Forward

The real question is what Sweden should do at this perhaps critical point in time. The current position of regional ICT advisor is due to disappear in 2008. And of course the decision to follow through with this plan, or to change it must be made very soon – likely prior to any definitive action by the government.

In consideration of the previously mentioned *Study of ICT for Development at Sida*, pending Sida's expected organizational review, the Sida Management Group has decided that Sweden does have a comparative advantage in supporting ICT4D, and that it will continue ICT4D support.

Since the withdrawal of funding for the resident ICT Advisor occurred prior to this Sida Management Group decision regarding ICT4D, the present assessment will assume that it may be possible to reinstate the ICT Advisor position. However, other alternatives will also be considered.

4.1 Will the Government of Tanzania Drive ICT4D?

The political leadership in Tanzania is clearly aware of ICT – it would be impossible for them not to be. And they no doubt believe that it should be used as an enabler to support development and address pressing national issues. But to date this view has not been supported by concrete, high-level actions. In 2006, the Governments of Tanzania and Sweden agreed that ICT should be a phase-out sector of Swedish development cooperation. In light of the Vision 2025 position on ICT, and given that Sweden has been one of the few donor countries willing to commit real resources to ICT4D, one could have reasonably expected the Government of Tanzania to have taken the position that ICT should be treated as a cross-cutting sector and that support be strengthened rather than phased out.

If, in the next short while, there is some indication from the top levels of the Government of Tanzania that it will take ICT4D seriously, then it is recommended that Sweden make a strong commitment to push this portfolio forward. This commitment should include the reconsideration of the ICT Advisor position, possibly on a country instead of a regional level. Moreover, there should be one or more full-time Programme Officer positions approved to ensure that where Sweden is engaged, the Embassy can properly follow through. Lastly, there must be some reasonably discretionary budget available to the Advisor to ensure that opportunities for pilot projects and activities to build ICT4D support can be acted on in a timely manner.

4.2 Swedish Position if not Demand-Driven

It is important to distinguish between demand at purely operational levels and formal demand from the Government. The former type of demand is clearly present. But without the latter formal demand, Sweden has no basis to allocate resources to ICT instead of the areas that the Government of Tanzania has indicated are its highest priorities.

Despite its own Vision 2025, Tanzania is not focusing on using ICT to support the country's overall development. This is unfortunate, as it closes off many useful paths, but ultimately the Government of Tanzania must make its own decisions on its priorities.

If no real indication of ICT4D interest is expressed by the government, there are two alternatives:

Alternative 1: Withdraw ICT4D support and if or when the Government of Tanzania takes action to integrate ICT4D into its top priorities, Sweden can revisit the question. This effectively throws away the experience and contacts developed from 2002–8, but is probably the correct decision if there is a belief

that it is going to be a long time before Tanzania is ready to formally focus some part of its energies on ICT4D.

Alternative 2: Extend ICT4D at the Embassy of Sweden in Dar es Salaam for a moderate period of time, perhaps 1–2 years. Alternatively, perhaps consideration should be given to keeping a regional ICT Advisor, but locating the Advisor in some other nearby (and more receptive) country. This alternative partially preserves the investment made over six years, and may serve notice that Sweden will not keep trying to “sell” ICT4D forever. If indeed the ICT4D champions who are now (but just now) trying to get the government to revisit ICT are successful, this positions Sweden to be a major player once the change is made.

4.3 Alternatives to a Resident ICT Advisor

The previous alternatives discuss the position of a resident ICT Advisor. It is unclear if the continuation of such a position is possible in Tanzania, and it is quite clear that all Swedish Embassies will not immediately be funded for such an advisor. Accordingly it is important to understand what other alternatives are possible if there is an intent to pursue ICT4D. These alternatives include:

- Short to medium term assignments of ICT4D-knowledgeable people to help raise awareness of opportunities both with Embassy staff and key government officials. This option lacks that ability to develop ongoing meaningful dialogues, but perhaps the aura of a “visiting expert” can partially compensate.
- As embassy staff are rotated, a priority consideration should be the selection of people who have some knowledge of, or at least are receptive to ICT4D issues. This could be particularly helpful for positions related to health care, education, good government and justice. However, past experience in both Sida and other countries indicates that this may be easier to decide to do than to actually carry out.

4.4 Recommendation

Obviously the scenario in which the Government of Tanzania decides to take ICT and ICT4D seriously is the preferred choice. Should there be believable indications that this is happening, Sweden should continue and enhance its ICT4D support at the Embassy in Dar es Salaam. Sufficient resources should be allocated so that Sweden can take its rightful role as the leading donor supporting ICT4D in Tanzania and the region, and so that the operation can be used as a model for other countries and regions in which Sida operates.

If there is no immediate concrete indication of support forthcoming, Sweden should minimally extend the support of ICT4D in Tanzania and the region, but in parallel ensure that presentations are made at the highest levels of government in the region so that there is complete understanding of the implications of the forthcoming withdrawal.

Appendix 1. Abbreviations and Acronyms

Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
COSTECH	Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology
DIT	Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology
GBS	General Budget Support
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
ICT4D	ICT for Development
KTH	Swedish Royal Institute of Technology
TanEdu	Tanzania Education and Information Services Trust
UDSM	University of Dar es Salaam
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society

Appendix 2. Interview Subjects

Name	Affiliation	Title
Gladys M. Busyanya	Tanzania Education and Information Services Trust (TanEdu)	Director
Geoff Calder	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training	ICT Advisor
Peter N. Chonjo	University of Dar es Salaam, faculty of Education	Professor; Head, Department of Curriculum and Teaching; Member, Steering Committee for Teacher Education
Hamis O. Dihenga	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training	Permanent Secretary
Roy R. Elineema	Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology	Registrar
Claudia Fritelli	Carnegie Corporation of New York	Program Associate, International Development Program
Staffan Herrström	Embassy of Sweden	Ambassador
J.W.A. Kondoro	Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology	Principal
August B. Kowero	Ministry of Infrastructure Development	Assistant Director Postal and Telecommunications
Sonia Languille	Delegation of the European Commission	Attaché, Cooperation – Economic Affairs
Daniel A. Long'lway	Tanzania Education and Information Services Trust (TanEdu)	Managing Director
Thomas Mathew	Tanzania Education and Information Services Trust (TanEdu)	Managing Director (Retired)
Tolly S. A. Mbwette	The Open University of Tanzania	Vice Chancellor
Theophilus E. Mlaki	Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH)	Director of Information and Documentation
Raphael Mtalima	Tanzania Education and Information Services Trust (TanEdu)	Assistant Project Manager
Beda Mutagahywa	University of Dar es Salaam	Managing Director, University Computing Centre Ltd; Professor
John S. Nkoma	Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority	Director General
Simbo Ntiro	Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH)	Advisor
Amos Nungu	Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology	ICT4RD Coordinator
Torbjörn Pettersson	Embassy of Sweden	Counsellor; Head of Development Cooperation
E. Runyoro	Ministry of Higher Education	Head of MIS Unit
Ernest S. Salla	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Assistant Resident Representative
David Sawe	President's Office, Public Service management Department	e-Gov Advisor
Petra Smitmanis-Dry	Embassy of Sweden	Second Secretary; Regional ICT Advisor
H. Twaakyondo	University of Dar es Salaam	Director Centre for Virtual Learning
Paula Uimonem	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training	ICT4D Consultant

Appendix 3. Terms of Reference

Consultancy Services Assessment of the comparative advantages of Swedish ICT support to Tanzania

1. Background

The Swedish support to telecommunications and ICT in development cooperation with Tanzania has a long history, including infrastructure support to the expansion of the fixed telecommunication network, institution building when the telecom regulation authority was established and the ICT programme which was started in 2002. A Programme Officer was recruited to identify strategic areas of cooperation in the ICT field and to establish relations and supporting activities. The programme started with a diverse portfolio of supporting activities, mainly directed towards sector support as to the telecom regulator and the ministry responsible for the area, rural development and ICT in Education. To align the ICT support to the Tanzanian Government poverty reduction strategy, the Mkukuta, the ICT support was consolidated to two main programmes, ICT for Rural Development and ICT for Education.

In the Swedish Cooperation strategy for development cooperation with Tanzania, 2006–2010 the institutional support to ICT development was identified as a phase out sector. The cooperation strategy also states that “the ongoing effort of supporting ICT integration in the education sector should be gradually aligned with the general budget allocation to education. Sweden’s comparative advantages as a donor in the ICT field will be assessed in the mid term review of the strategy”. To contribute to the review process, an assessment of the ICT support from Sida/Swedish Embassy and other donors efforts in the field will be made.

Sida is the only donor in Tanzania with a specific programme for ICT at present. UNDP has previously worked with ICT support but is reducing the number of ICT activities. However, ICT is increasingly used by government agencies, institutions and organisations in Tanzania and the importance of strategic interventions for ICT implementation to reach best results for the investments made is increasing. There are many examples of institutions utilizing ICT components without the ability to properly integrate the tool into the operations.

Sida supports the integration of ICT in developing countries in order to improve communications and the exchange of information. Sida’s policy is outlined in the document “Strategy and Action Plan for ICT in Development Cooperation”. The role of ICT4D is also described in Sida’s report “ICT for Poverty Alleviation”.

Sida has identified ICT as an important tool for development. In March 2007 Sida commissioned a study to primarily serve as background material and input for the discussion at Sida’s management group how the future integration of ICT in Swedish development cooperation should be designed and organized. The study was presented in the beginning of June 2007 at a management meeting. The findings of the study will feed into the assignment proposed in this Terms of Reference.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the services is to assess the comparative advantages of Sweden:

- as a donor to the development of the ICT Sector in Tanzania (support directed to regulation, institutional support to critical actors)
- as a donor with a focus on ICT as a cross-cutting issue in development cooperation to reach the Tanzanian development targets.
- to present conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the assessment in terms of future direction of the Swedish support to ICT in development cooperation with Tanzania, but also in relations to the findings in the study of the ICT for development donor support commissioned by Sida HQ

The report shall primarily serve as an input to Sida's mid term review of the Cooperation Strategy for Development Cooperation with Tanzania, 2006–2010.

3. Scope of the Services

The scope of the services should include, but is not restricted to:

- a brief description of ICT4D development in Tanzania, including activities in ICT as a tool for information and communication to promote democracy (institutional level as well as grass root) and monitoring of democratic processes such as elections, media/press freedom and freedom of expression
- a description of the opinions and recommendations of the various stakeholders of Sweden as a donor in the ICT field, including Government agencies, Development partners, private sector, academia and civil society,
- a description of the ICT4D work among selected donor agencies, both as an integrated measure and as support to the sector per se,
- an assessment of the role and achievements of the Swedish Embassy as a donor in the ICT field
- an analysis of the demand for Swedish involvement as a donor in the ICT field from Tanzanian stakeholders
- an assessment of the comparative advantages that Sweden has as a donor supporting
 - development in the ICT sector/ institutional support to ICT development
 - ICT as a cross-cutting issue to take advantage of the development potential in introducing ICT into other sectors.
- Recommendations of the future direction of the Swedish ICT support based on the analysis and assessment

4. Methodology

The methodology for the study:

Step 1 – Inventory of information.

Step 2 – Analysis.

Step 3 – Proposal.

Data gathering for the study will use sources available internationally and interviews with stakeholders in the ICT field in Tanzania, representatives of selected donors and agencies and from a field visits to Tanzania. The field visits to Tanzania is estimated to 10 working days.

5. Time Plan

The time plan for the study is:

June	ToR finalised. Contract with consultant
August	Work initiated & field visit to Tanzania
September	Draft report
October	Final report

6. Reporting

The following reports will be produced in English by the consultants, and be delivered to Sida in electronic format:

1. A draft version of the Assessment of comparative advantages of the Swedish ICT support in Tanzania study.
2. A final version of the Assessment of comparative advantages of the Swedish ICT support in Tanzania study.

The study is expected to be 15 pages. The draft will be submitted to the Swedish Embassy not later than September 15 for comments. The final version will be delivered to Swedish Embassy no later than October 15, 2007.

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