Information Needs Assessment Model for Identifying Information Needs of Rural Communities

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Often rural informatics solutions are designed without adequate consultation with the rural poor, leading to a “Design-Reality” gap. The rural informatics professionals tend to develop ICT solutions based on their own perception of the end-users’ requirements, rather than exploring the rural poor’s information needs. As a result, the rural informatics applications are not well-accepted and remain underutilized. We would like to introduce an Information Needs Assessment Model (INAM) to identify the information needs of the rural communities that addresses these issues.

This model comprises a set of processes: Theme Analysis, Profile Analysis, Existing Community Information Systems Analysis, and Prioritization of Information Needs.

1. Theme Analysis helps gain a preliminary understanding of all the relevant aspects of the problem.

2. Profile Analysis is a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) analysis, which also charts the life events of the rural poor in the targeted community, along with the area, country, and region inhabited by the rural community. It highlights the areas that need intervention to bring about development.

3. Existing Information Systems Analysis checks for other community information systems which may already be operational in the target area or other areas with a similar profile to uncover success stories and lessons learned.

4. In the Prioritization of Information Needs exercise governing criteria guide the decision of which critical information needs should be addressed and delivered first. These criteria include information: critical to poverty reduction; necessary to facilitate a smooth citizen-govern-
Figure 1. Information categories representing the information needs of rural communities