Oke-Ogun Community Development Agenda 2000 Plus
An Example of Community Development and Networking

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1 Introduction

CAWD/OOCD is an unusual development partnership across the digital divide. This description starts with an overview of its key elements, and its purpose, then covers some of its elements in more detail. Following that picture, the networks related to the program are introduced, with a little information about how some of the parts interact. If you recognise your own particular interests within the present or future scope of this project you are welcome to make contact, to explore potential areas of overlap and possible collaboration.

2 Key elements

The InfoCentre
The project opened its first InfoCentre in Ago-Are, in Oyo State, Nigeria, in June 2003. Ago-Are is the natural home of the project, as it is the birthplace of the late founder, Peter Adetunji Oyawale. However the InfoCentre could equally well be in some other small town or large village elsewhere in rural Africa, and proliferation is part of our vision.

The key players
The project came about through Peter’s vision, and his informal networks. On one side of the digital divide are supporters from his birthplace. On the “connected side” are supporters from the UK, where he lived later in life. The supporters in Nigeria are
known as OOCD, and the project there is known as OOCD 2000+. Supporters in the UK are CAWD. The names and functions are explained later.

3 The “Where, what and why?” of the project
Oke-Ogun is a neglected rural area, which is Information Poor, so people move away to build their knowledge and skills and to make a better life elsewhere. Peter wanted to help Oke-Ogun to become Information Rich, so that people could stay where they were, and still be able to build their knowledge and skills. He particularly wanted to give people better access to knowledge and skills that could be applied locally, gradually building a better life for the whole community. He believed this could be done through what he called CDICs (Community Digital Information Centres) combined with community radio. (The community radio element is delayed because the broadcasting license has not been granted.)

You may know about donor led telecentres, with broadband connectivity and external funding, but it is not like that in Ago-Are. The Ago-Are InfoCentre is largely self-funded. It has three computers, and is miles from the nearest telephone network. However is has a large and increasing store of digital information. People connected with OOCD 2000+ and the InfoCentre are gradually recognising the implications of having access to digital information, and considering how to develop that potential in a meaningful way.

4 Further details

OOCD 2000+
OOCD 2000+ (Oke-Ogun Community Development Agenda 2000 Plus) is a small grassroots project in rural Nigeria. Its name comes from a list of things Peter wanted to make happen in his home area. OOCD 2000+ normally refers to the project and OOCD to the people. Key OOCD people are Chief Adetola, Chief Adejumo, Chief Mojoyinola and Mr Timothy Oyawale (uncle of Peter Oyawale), who formed the original OOCD committee. The project manager (its first full time worker) is David Mutua a Kenyan VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) volunteer. The plan is for a retired indigene to take over the InfoCentre management when David’s placement ends. The manager will work with existing staff member Mujidat Lawal, and two Corpsers (Nigerian graduates doing community service).

CAWD
CAWD takes its name from the Committee for African Welfare and Development, which Peter was setting up in the UK to enable his agenda for development. CAWD consists of two volunteers (Lorraine Duff and Pamela McLean) who use their home Internet connections on behalf of the project. They raise the profile of OOCD 2000+ and network on its behalf, provide CD-Roms of relevant information, and maintain email contact with David and the chairman, Chief Adejumo.

CAWD/OOCD
Having separate names for CAWD and OOCD helps outsiders to realise that, despite a shared vision, the team operates from two continents, with contrasting norms of culture and communication.
5 The networks

**OOCD**

OOCD’s networks are almost exclusively “real” community based networks. People in Oke-Ogun are closely connected through community groups and extended families. The original OOCD committee members are all people with reputations of integrity and community service. OOCD 2000+ benefits from their wide social, business and administrative networks.

**CAWD**

CAWD’s networks are almost exclusively “virtual” Internet based networks. They have developed largely through email lists and virtual conferences. It is not practical for OOCD to join e-lists. CAWD joins on their behalf, sharing the realities of the project, asking for information, passing it on, and making some direct introductions.

CAWD also edits an e-newsletter on behalf of OOCD 2000+. To join the list go to [http://lists.kabissa.org/mailman/listinfo/oocd2000plus](http://lists.kabissa.org/mailman/listinfo/oocd2000plus)

**CAWD/OOCD internal networking**

The communication link between CAWD and OOCD is crucial and hard won.

Initially email contact was between Chief Adejumo and Pam. Chief divides his time between urban Ibadan and rural Okeho. He can only email when he is in Ibadan, and he usually sends an intermediary to the e-mail bureau. The use of an intermediary was initially a cause of confusion, but is now understood and easier to manage.

When David first arrived to serve as project manager there was an agreed target of David and Pam exchanging emails twice a month. This soon proved to be over-ambitious.

It takes a high level of trust to collaborate through poor communication channels. It is not too difficult to work separately on aspects of the long-term vision. What is difficult is working towards difficult short term or medium term objectives, where ideally there would be close collaboration and good communication. It is necessary to just keep on going, creatively working on one side of things, in the hope that nothing has happened to turn the original plan into a Bad Idea. Meeting up along the way, by means of an email, and finding everyone has moved on in the same general direction, is a cause of considerable relief and rejoicing.

From time to time it is essential to physically cross the digital divide and spend chunks of time together, absorbing detail. OOCD and Pam first met in February 2001, David and Pam first met in August 2002, and again in August 2003. Pam’s next trip is scheduled for April 2003, as David’s VSO placement ends in May.

**CAWD/OOCD external networking**

CAWD and OOCD share their external networks, and the contact points within CAWD/OOCD are beginning to shift in subtle ways. Two examples spring to mind. COL (the Commonwealth of Learning) was initially a CAWD contact. It is now a well-established direct OOCD contact. RUSEL (RUrual SEArch Light), a micro-credit
organisation in Oke-Ogun, was initially an OOCD contact. It is now a well-established direct CAWD contact.

Contacts within Nigeria can be difficult. For example, CAWD works increasingly closely with Fantsuam Foundation (FF) an organisation in central Nigeria with many interests overlapping those of OOCD. CAWD introduced FF to OOCD, but direct communication between OOCD and FF is difficult. CAWD keeps in touch with both.

CAWD/OOCD contact with academia is increasing. We have little opportunity to study theory, but believe that research and practice should inform each other. We hope to collaborate with researchers on mutually beneficial projects.

Networks around the InfoCentre
CAWD/OOCD recognises a number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs), represented by people who use the InfoCentre. From CAWD’s viewpoint (monitoring information and collecting it up to send) it makes no difference if a SIG has one person or fifty. All that matters is if it is active or not. If a SIG is active then we normally collect relevant information and send CD-Rom InfoPacks, backed up with some emails. The details vary depending on the people involved. If a SIG is not currently active, but we have good reason to think it will be, we simply monitor information, ready to create a quick relevant InfoPack as soon as it is needed.

Current SIGs that we serve in some way are health and hygiene, education, agriculture, women, youth, children (including handicapped children), sustainable energy, e-gov, micro-credit and livelihoods. Some SIGs have sub-groups.

6 Summary
This description gives an introduction to CAWD/OOCD, the InfoCentre, and some of the networking related to the project. It makes no attempt to list all the individuals and groups involved in our networks, or to explain how they come together or why they stay in contact. Only the key elements have been looked at in any detail, with some observations made about the “real” networks surrounding OOCD and the “virtual” networks surrounding CAWD. It is a simplified picture of the CAWD/OOCD networks, but captures the essence.

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