

# The Uganda VSAT School-Based Telecenter End of Year Status Report

## Introduction

January 2003, the School-based Telecenter (SBT) project turned 1 year old. It has been a year of experience and challenges however as a team, most of the challenges have been addressed. All the 15-targeted school-based Telecenter sites are now connected.

Yet in what has been one of the biggest achievements of the SBT, the project finished as a finalist of the prestigious Stockholm Challenge Award 2002 in Sweden last October.

During the first year, numerous key activities have been undertaken including local needs assessment, equipment procurement, skills training workshops and commissioning of the project (refer to schematic of the VSAT network at the end of the report). The 3 spread spectrum links off Busoga College Mwiri VSAT School were installed and tested in June 2002 (refer to schematic two). VSO Interns delivered hardware and software training sessions including Linux server management to ICT coordinators for six months.

Within the framework of Energy for Rural Transformation/Knowledge Economy (ERT/KE) project knowledge packets for high impact service have been developed on telemedicine and e-commerce activities. The planning phase of the activities enlisted vital support from the local government of Moroto district and the Ministry of Health among others. At least 2 SBT sites are in advanced stages of on-line distance education support.

As a follow-up to the HIV/AIDS and ICT workshop held in September 2002, a new track has been developed; "the on-line HIV/AIDS and Youth Adolescent Counseling service". The activity to be undertaken in partnership with ICT for Education Program/EDC/Straight Talk Foundation (in Uganda) will provide youth with timely access to counseling services using the SBT infrastructure. Straight Talk Foundation, which is a reknown Adolescent communication initiative, will be responsible for technical backstopping.

A SBT telecenter review workshop was held at Colline Hotel Mukono, Uganda in September to assess progress of the project. Specific benchmarks (see page 13) and tools for evaluation of the project have been collaboratively developed with key stakeholders and ICT coordinators.

In November 2002 a videoconference session was also held involving participants from Ghana, Nigeria, USA and Uganda with over 20 participants in the Uganda site alone. This was part of the regular World Bank's videoconference series on ICTs in Education.

A School Based Telecenter project website has been developed to promote the project within the global knowledge society and a specific domain name registered.

In the following sections, we bring you specific activity reports from the Uganda VSAT SBT sites as reported by coordinators around the country. See our partners on page 13.

This report brings to the fore experiences and challenges that confront the SBT project most prominent of which are the following:

**Management systems** – Importance and impact of lack of management systems to the over all development of the SBTs. SBTs with elaborate management systems and team work have performed much better (see Duhaga report)

The reports also point to the need to minimize the impact of teacher and head teacher transfers to the project in part by institutionalizing management and expanding scope of responsibilities.

Many SBTs need to improve management of collections including students IT fees and community access user fees as well as funds from special events.

**Local Capacity** – Many SBTs have had longer down time than necessary because of lack of internal capacity maintain, service and fix hardware and software related problems. PMM Girls (not indicated in this report) is a good example of internal capacity within staff.

**Staff overload** – ICT coordinators who double as classroom teachers for subjects other than IT have complained of overload

**Services** – More creativity is needed to expand the scope of utilization of SBTs within the school and community. There have been interesting attempts of linkages to distance learning, university programs among others but the speed still wanting (see Teso and Kigezi High reports). Ndejje is yet to follow-up on the linkage with Ndejje University, which would offer enormous potential.

**Access** – community access has been good in several schools (see Kigezi and Moroto High reports) and community access times have been regularized.

**Service promotions** – the importance of promotions and social marketing is demonstrated in Kigezi high report and Duhaga (aspect not included in this report) where partnerships with local FM radio stations have been established to promote the services of the telecenters. Including downloading MP3 to be played on FM radio with complimentary mention and promotion of the SBT.

There are more experiences in this report, please read on. We would like know what you think of this program if you have a comment or question let us know.

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## **Teso College Aloet SBT**

*By Joseph Eregu, ICT Coordinator*

### **General**

The School Based Telecenter has been operating with students as the major users until the holiday time when they left for holiday. The use of the School-based Telecenter climaxed this year towards the end of the third term because of the production of examination materials and documents for the school Annual General Meeting.

### **Activities**

Over 10 teachers and their spouses are taking advantage of the holiday to perfect basic knowledge and skills in MS Word, MS Excel and PowerPoint. 2 local policemen are also on training in this group.

There is hope that some students will be prepared to sit the national examination in computer studies in 2004. The SBT is also taking part in the YOUTH IT PROJECT which targets both youth out of school and those at school. This program started effectively this January 2003.

### **Linkages with Other Schools**

The SBT is central to the development of ICT in Teso region and Institutions and individuals are increasingly recognizing the SBT as such. So far, one training institution in Soroti town has used the centre for their IT course unit training delivery. Students were brought to the SBT for practical sessions after theory work at their institution. Makerere University Department of Distance Education identified our centre for its Bachelor of Science External program coordination unit. In a related development, plans are underway to sign a Memorandum Of Understanding with Makerere University.

It is expected that if the partnership with Makerere University Distance Education program takes off the school and the entire community will benefit a lot.

### **Staffing and Management**

The SBT enjoys a departmental status in Teso College. 5 teachers, (5 male and 1 female, constitute the Department of Computer Studies of the school with the Deputy Headmaster as the coordinator. There is one cleaner. Each teacher is allocated the classes he/she handles and the general school timetable is followed. Department meetings are held regularly and deliberations are presented to the entire staff during staff meetings.

### **Constraints**

There has been a regular breakdown of machines and yet the funds are not readily available to effect quick replacements. Unfortunately there is also limited technical know how among the staff especially for troubleshooting and repairs. Another constraint is the congested school routine, which makes timely reports difficult as required by the national project coordination office.

### **Technical**

Most of the computers have been serviced at least once. The breakdowns which were reported earlier are generally attributed to carelessness by some users especially

students. The Internet speeds have also dropped in the recent times and transmissions have become irregular during much of December 2002.

### **Achievements**

- Basic computer literacy has been spread to the student community of over 1000 and teachers.
- Communication has been made easy and cheap. The school community can now access various news, magazines, reports etc quickly and cheaply over the Internet.
- The surrounding community has benefited from the e-mail service, Internet surfing and word processing.
- Teachers particularly have been able to diversify their teaching methods and techniques for the benefit of the students. Teachers have also enriched content of subject matter through access to on-line resources.

### **Recommendations**

The SBT project has come along way with a lot of contribution from a number of our partners. We propose that this spirit continues.

- We suggest that SchoolNet Uganda continues to play the role of “God parent” for the telecenters for a reasonable period of time. The feeling is that the year 2004 is too soon and abrupt for the telecenters to takeoff effectively.
- World Links Organisation and the ICT for Development Program should continue as close partners especially in terms of connectivity fees which is a major cost at least up to the time the Telecenter becomes self reliant.
- There is need to train teacher coordinators on some technical aspects and troubleshooting. Organizing workshops to address the problem could help alot.

### **Other Issues:**

We usually experience problems when there is a change in the school head and especially if the incoming head had no computer centre in his/her former station. Computer projects appear expensive for them and it makes operations difficult. This issue could be discussed in the Headteachers’ meetings with a view of finding sustainable solutions

The issue of certification after ICT training frequently comes up from our clients and the student body. They require that there be a document to authenticate their achievements in the use of the technology.

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### **Duhaga S.S SBT**

*By: Kiiza Ali and Nantale Florence, ICT Coordinators*

### **General Status of the Center.**

Duhaga School Based Telecenter (SBT) operates on a daily basis. At the moment the SBT has seven networked (on A LAN) computers that are connected on Internet and all (the seven) in good working condition. 2 PCs developed fatal disk problems recently but plans are underway to have them all repaired.

**Activities /Services:**

Among the activities, currently we have Computer Training, which is always a holiday programme. So far we have registered students on vacation and one civil servant. We have also started training of 20 out-of-school youths under YouthIT project. The youths will initially under go Phase 0 training in basic IT skills including introduction to computer, Ms word. Ms Excel and PowerPoint.

Other services include the following:

- Computer training
- Type setting and Printing
- E-mail and surfing.
- And Research services.

**Linkages:**

Our School-Based Telecenter has many opportunities with people and organizations within Hoima who like to link with us through subscription to our Internet services. However we have not realized actual partnerships yet.

We are exploring linkage with Makerere University in Kampala so that we can have external students mainly those at Master program level within the districts of Hoima, Kiboga Masindi and Kibaale, using our SBT for educational research and communication with the University. One community client who is a student of Makerere University, Mr. Mugenyi Stephen has promised to link us to Makerere University distance education external programme. He is doing Masters in Education but is also an official in the district education Department. He has been using the SBT for his research work and sending assignments to the university. Mr. Mugenyi promised to talk to the Head of the programme for External Students with a view of making the SBT the coordinating centre where students can receive and send their educational materials. We are hopeful that the SBT would get some money for the service.

**Staffing and Management activities:**

Our center has a five-member Management committee chaired by the Head Teacher. The committee has two ICT teachers and two members from the teaching staff. The main purpose of the committee is to plan for the School-Based Telecenter and to ensure its smooth operation.

**Revenue Collection:**

The center gets its revenue mainly from E-mail, Internet surfing and computer training, which is seasonal. This money is banked on the telecenter account and it's mainly used to meet the costs of servicing, buying ink, paying allowances of the committee members, repairs of computer and paying the monthly salary of the Laboratory attendant. However with effect from this year (2003), our students will start paying UGX 10.000/= on top of their school fees as a contribution towards Computer Laboratory development and sustainability. This money will also be banked on the Telecenter account and will largely boost the revenue of the SBT.

**Technology Performance:**

Generally we have performed fairly well in this field. Simple technical problems that arise are normally solved now and then and those that we can't handle are reported to the SchoolNet engineer. This support has helped the SBT to operate regularly with minimum difficulties.

**Observation:**

The Internet goes off for sometime or for days, for instance recently it was off for more than a week. We don't know how the secretariat looks at it as regards Internet subscription.

**Recommendations:**

Once a fault is reported it should be acted upon quickly. SchoolNet should organize more technical capacity building workshop trainings for IT coordinator mainly in Network administration.

Once again colleagues, we thank you for your time and energy in keeping SBTs in operation.

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**Moroto High SBT**

*By Ruremire G. (Headmaster) and Odeke Andrew (SBT attendant)*

**The General Status**

The School-based Telecenter is equipped with 6-networked computers, a power generator, and a medium solar energy installation among others. Our management committee working with the ICT coordinator and attendant has been very instrumental in the development of the SBT. We have purchased 2 P3s during the last year.

**Current Activities/Services**

The main services at the SBT have been;

- Training of students in the school and young people from the community
- Internet services and E-mail services
- Internet surfing for information
- Telemedicine project as an out-reached activity to the hospitals of Moroto and Matany
- Workshops e.g. community animal health network (CAHNET) for veterinary Doctors in Kenya and Uganda.
- Secretarial work and type setting

**Planned Activities**

During this year, the SBT has planned a number of activities which include installation of a telephone line, purchase of a scanner, digital camera, CD writer, dust blower and maintenance kit and upgrading of available hardware and software. The SBT also will develop local capacity within the school in ICTs.

### **Key Linkages/Opportunities**

The SBT is working on a number of linkages with the community organizations. These include ICT training for NGOs staff, Telemedicine for Moroto and Matany Hospitals and a possibility of sharing our Internet connection with the Primary Teachers' College in Moroto.

### **Constraints/ Observation**

In the last year, the Telecenter has been faced with a number of challenges and the most prominent are: breakdown of computers, insufficient energy supply, limited number of computers compared to the high number of clients, lack of on the ground technical support.

The school administration has now invested in solar energy for power supply and technical training for staff members. Although the solar energy installation is small in capacity, it has been very useful ever since it was installed. The SBT is also planning to increase the number of computers available.

### **Achievements.**

- Training of students and outsiders.
- Offering of e-mail services and Internet surfing.
- Community and NGO's have benefited as they send messages and communicate to the outside world and families.
- Training of medical staff of Moroto Hospital and Matany Hospital in the use of ICTs in health service delivery.
- Holding of workshops i.e. Community Animal Health network (CAHNET).
- We have received income for installation of solar power worth 6.6 million (but not adequate).

### **Recommendation**

- We request for support to address internal technical capacity adequately.
- Technical equipment acquisition, alternative power source to reduce the overhead costs,
- To train staff who can service, repair minor problems on computers.

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### **Busoga College Mwiri SBT**

*By: Mugoya Henry-Mwondha, ICT Coordinator*

### **General Status**

Our Mission for 2002 was to operate by the principles and ideals of the typical SBT as outlined in the guidelines and to offer better services than in 2001.

The consistency of connectivity to the 'www' via VSAT has enhanced our Internet/e-mail activities. This has been so in teaching, research, e-mail, tele-collaborative projects and online training. Printing and scanning private materials has also been more than it was

during 2001. Above all, we have been given the opportunity to operate as a quasi ISP for the 4 wireless SBT schools in Jinja area.

### **Activities**

This year, we hope to deliver workshops for groups of interested people with emphasis on teachers, students, youth and women groups. We also plan to encourage more of our teachers to participate in the numerous online professional training opportunities available on the Internet for instance at I\*EARN website.

We have kept in constant touch with most of the SchoolNet Uganda family members especially through e-mail and ICQs (Internet instant messaging facilities).

We have also kept in touch with the Source café in Jinja and their management. As a result of this relationship, the school hopes to get some assistance in hardware from the NGO.

The year 2002 also saw our school website has finally been put up. What remains is to go through the formalities of registration and payment of subscription fees for a 'mwiri.sc.ug' domain. We were also able to update our three old sites during the year. We have been able to conduct lessons for our students successfully throughout the year and we have no complaint from the students about missing out on lessons in Computer Studies.

### **Staffing and management**

Issues of staff and load have not been so bad in 2002. The three teachers in the department have been able to handle the load comfortably after their teaching load in other areas was reduced a bit. However, we have not been able to operate fully by the guidelines because we have not yet created the management committee.

### **Challenges and Issues**

A major constraint has been our failure to provide good machines to match the Internet we have in the lab. The demand is higher than the machines can handle. As usual, we have also had a number of breakdowns many of which we have been able to handle ourselves. On the whole, our machines held out well throughout the year.

We did not collect much money but the little we collected was used to buy inputs like CDRs and other basic inputs like soap for cleaning. Already students pay for the sustenance of the SBT as part of the tuition fees.

I would like to encourage all members of the SchoolNet Uganda family to work together and closely more than ever before. We shall be able to learn more and to solve our 'common' problems faster, cheaper and easier. I can now say with confidence that ALL teachers at our school now use ICTs in their day-to-day work. Many have improved on their proficiency in ICTs at various levels; as a result of consistent encouragement and training.

I do hope that we shall all be able to plan well for the transition so that by the time the changes come in 2004. I would wish the SchoolNet Uganda officers to look around for a probably more efficient and appropriate technology when the current sponsorship expires.

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## **Kigezi High SBT**

*By Apollo Makiika, ICT Coordinator*

### **General Status.**

Kigezi High School Based Telecenter began operation in 2000. Right now, we have 7 networked computers on the Internet. One of the first things we had to do was to restore the order of students in handling the computers. Many like 15 students could crowd on one computer and the Teacher could not see what they were doing. In the end, many programmes would be distorted or deleted and this was the cause of the major breakdowns of the computers.

So we had to install "NetTime" software for client timing on each of the computers. Each student would be given a specific time. The whole school applauded this software because everybody now had the chance to access the Internet.

After restoring order among students, we had to face the task of wooing back the community that had left after the break down of the machines. The first approach was to go on the local Fm Radio station. For one month we were on air and this brought results but not fully.

We had to print brochures after receiving a tip from Meddie Mayanja, who had noted that the publicity of the Telecenter in Kigezi High was poor. We distributed them to most public places like Hotels, Hospital, and Supermarkets etc. This brought great results and we haven't stopped with this kind of publicity.

Posters were also printed and word of mouth did us a great service. The SBT will be officially launched on March 1, 2003.

### **Major Activities/Services Offered.**

The center is open on Monday through Saturday, 8.00am to 7.00pm. Our services include Internet surfing, e-mails, printing and photocopying.

### **Future Plans**

- Buying three computers every term
- Colored printer
- Upgrading software
- Carpets
- Keyboards
- Mice
- Scanner
- Digital camera
- Whiteboard makers
- Text books
- Launching the School-Based Telecenter-Scheduled for 1st March.

## Key Linkages/Opportunities With Other People And Institutions

Kigezi High school is recognized nationally and internationally. Currently the partners include, SchoolNet Uganda, Barham Christian University, Makerere University- Long Distance Programme and Warriner School in London, which is interested in supporting the operation of the Telecenter and the visitation of teachers from either school.

## Constraints/Observation

- (i) The Telecenter has low-grade machines therefore they need upgrading or replacement with new machines.
- (ii) Our LAN is a peer- to -peer and this causes a lot of inconveniences.
- (iii) The Internet is on and off in the recent weeks. *[During December 2002, Verester changed the primary and secondary DNS for the Uganda VSAT network. This put the network offline until for some time – Eng. Allen Luyima]*
- (iv) Hardware and software maintenance.

## Management and Staffing

We have a staff committee that runs the affairs of the telecenter

2 full time ICT resource teachers and a SBT assistant man the telecenter. The ICT Teacher is employed by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture while the School Administration and Board of Governors employ the Assistant.

## Achievements

- (i) Repairing of the broken down machines.
- (ii) Through leaflets/brochures, posters helped us to acquire customers in the telecenter.
- (iii) Provision of ICT services to the community around us.
- (iv) Introduction of computer studies in the school.

## Lesson Learned

- (i) One lesson learned is that promotion times do bring in customers.
- (ii) Computer performance is built around maintenance
- (iii) There is exchange of experiences among the communities.

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## **Jinja S.S SBT**

*By E. Tibagye ICT Coordinator*

### **Historical background**

The school had in 1998 acquired 10 used computers from one of the old members of staff from Netherlands, Father Picavet. In the year 2000 we got 10 computers from SchoolNet. The same year we solicited for more 15 computers from the British donors. The school has two computer laboratories. The school had already three teachers who had undergone computer training at Makerere University. At the moment about 55% of school staff is computer literate.

The SBT is equipped with the 10 brand new computers all on LAN from the SchoolNet/World SBT project with 2 printers DeskJet and inkjet, 14 other computer sets from donors, 1 digital camera, 1 Scanner and 1 Microphone. The school is planning to purchase a new Dot Matrix Printer.

### **The Staff**

The teachers use the lab for teaching using CDs and making their lesson notes. The administration use the computer Lab for keeping salary, tracking fees records and payment.

### **Students**

The students use the telecenter to access educational information/resources especially Chemistry and French by the use of CDs. This has broken down the traditional ways of getting educational resources from the teacher. Students are keen to study by the use of computers. Some students are so keen that they have started teaching others while the teachers are just supervising. Two of our students have undergone LINUX training course.

### **Funding & Management**

The telecenter department unlike other departments has started generating its own funds. A fee is levied to any work printed in the telecenter and collections have been used to meet costs for consumables.

There has been no much private printing done during the last half of the year 2002. We only raised 30,000/= out of it. The printing was mostly official work for the school.

### **Software**

We have so far got a number of software packages that include Encarta 1997 that students put to use in their entire day-to-day learning environment. We also got the following software's: Adobe, Tell me More in (French), Science encyclopedia, Furry elephant (Physics) DK Multi media. On line software, Eye witness world atlas, 20<sup>th</sup> century day by day, System software, Children's encyclopedia, advantage Diskettes, The way things work, Sats Educ, World, Evergreen Curriculum, Borland C++ builder 4, DK encyclopedia of science, Ultimate human body.

### **Current Developments**

The school has been connected on Internet except for much of December 2002 we had irregular Internet. However at times when it is consistent, there is surfing for knowledge going on both by the teachers and students. The community has started using the facilities especially the holidaymakers who have shown keen interest. We expect to raise

about 150,000/= per month on the Internet which will be spent on computer maintenance and trainers.

### **The way forward**

We expect have planned training of holidaymakers from within since the computer lab is open most part of the day. We are also looking forward for more computer users for especially the use of Internet so that cost of payment for bandwidth and management.

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### **Ndejje S.S SBT**

*By Andama Wilbert and Okello Moses, ICT Coordinator*

### **General status of our SBT**

The Network has 9 computers fully functioning and in good condition. In general the school laboratory is furnished with 17 computers including two new ones acquired recently. The new PCs P4 with 1.80GHz processors and Windows XP. The SBT also has a multipurpose printer used as photocopier; fax machine as well as a scanner.

### **Major activities/services**

The current S.3s and S.4s have been taught the computer the basics of computer science including office applications. Teachers, university lecturers and students use the SBT to access educational information resources. Some clients undertake on-line training especially using [www.gcflearnfree.org](http://www.gcflearnfree.org) ;

In this year we plan to expand our services/activities and technology base by acquiring an LCD projector for training purposes and a CD writer. We intend to register students to sit UNEB exams in Computer Science and increase literacy overall levels of the community around in IT and its values.

### **Key linkages/opportunities**

The SBT has had a number of partnership opportunities that include Ndejje university staff and students, other schools in Luwero district without access to computers and Internet and Nandere catholic seminary staff and students.

### **Staffing and management committee activities**

The School based telecenter is managed as a Department at Ndejje S.S. However the department is currently under staffed. It has two qualified teachers in ICT. The workload is big for the teachers because in addition to ICT tasks they also teach other traditional subjects where they have a bigger load compared to the ICT load.

In the near future we plan to seriously advocate for more staff to be relieved of the other teaching subjects. We hope it will workout since IT is going to be officially incorporated in the school syllabus. In addition to the IT teachers we also have a Laboratory Assistant who helps to supervise on going activities in the SBT.

We are very grateful to the school policy towards developing the SBT. Every term the school has promised to buy at least two new computers for the Lab. The school has always put in funds to maintain the existing resources.

### **Constraints/observation**

Understaffing within the SBT is biggest constraint. There is also need to relax too much restriction on the outside community in order facilitate their access to the facility and therefore tap more revenue from them.

### **Technology performance**

We have not experienced major problems. We are always online; Software and hardware malfunctions are always fixed in time whenever reported and the SBT does routine maintenance to make sure that the computers function well. However we would wish to have one of us trained in Hardware servicing;

### **Achievements**

- Improved teaching skills by staff members
- Increased number of computers
- Better revenue collections
- Increased literacy level among students and the outside community

### **Recommendations**

The need to organize a workshop for at least one IT teacher in every school on computer hardware servicing and if possible this should include aspects on Firewalls to stop students from accessing porn sites.

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## **Key Benchmarks for School-Based Telecenter Sustainability Planning**

### **Institutional dimension**

1. Overall vision for the SBT
2. Institutionalized management capacity – including skills and competence
3. Availability of support systems/structures within the school and community e.g. management committees
4. Involvement of the community and other special groups e.g. Board of Governors
5. Awareness of the services of the SBT within the community and school
6. Availability of strategies for IT staff retention

### **Technical dimension**

1. The SBT should have internal capacity or otherwise accessible.
2. IT coordinators should be able to perform the following tasks - switching, reconfigurations, troubleshooting, fault, identification and reporting for all equipment available in the SBT.
3. Availability of technical maintenance plans
4. Strategies for acquisition of new (or additional in case of used) equipment including computers
5. Plans for complementary technologies e.g. television, VCR, photocopiers etc
6. Strategies for capacity building for staff and management teams

### **Social dimension**

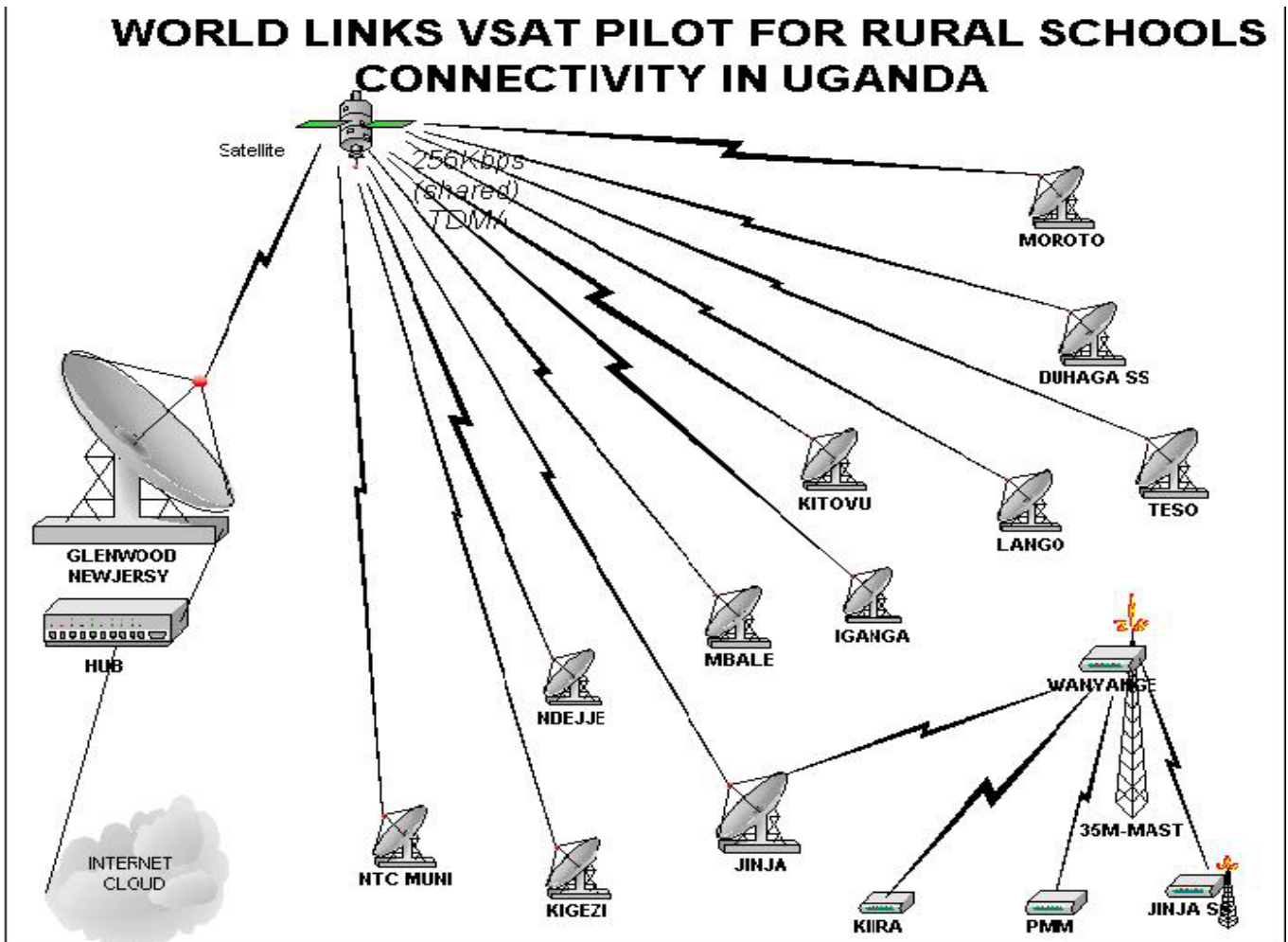
1. Provide access to ICT services including at least one-community service
2. Demonstration of impact to the school or community
3. Participation of the community and school in the service of the community unless otherwise stated
4. Strategies for continued growth of the SBT to meet the growing needs of the school and community

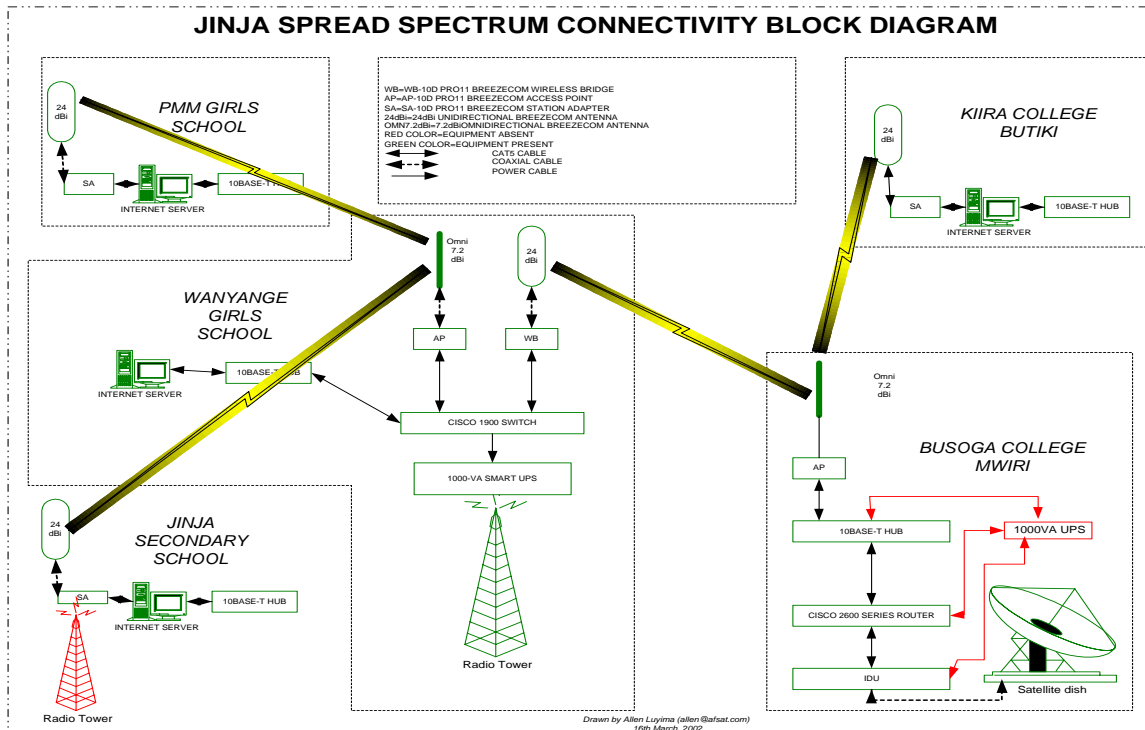
**Financial dimension**

1. Capacity to understand and identify the different cost areas and revenue streams of the SBTs
2. Capacity to appreciate risks to the telecenter revenue streams
3. Capacity to meet the costs either directly through sale of services or joint ventures or any other means appropriately identified by the stakeholders.
4. Availability of long term planning mechanisms like business plan/action plan/development plan etc
5. Diversity of services

In addition to the above mentioned sustainability benchmarks, due attention shall be given to the internal dynamics of the school-based telecenter network. As such, site-specific benchmarks shall be considered in assessing sustainability.

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