

# Last Mile Initiative Impact Assessment

10/05-10/07

Status: Ongoing

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## ***Background***

### **The Last Mile Initiative**

USAID's Last Mile Initiative (LMI) is a global program to expand the access of the rural poor to communications. Launched in April 2004, LMI intends to spur increases in productivity and transform the development prospects of farmers, small business, new startups and other organizations in rural areas presently underserved by the world's major voice and data telecommunications networks.

Six countries were selected to participate in LMI in the inaugural year (Peru, Guatemala, Macedonia, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Sri Lanka). Fifteen additional countries were selected in 2005.

### **Project Objectives**

Under this activity, dot-ORG was tasked to undertake impact evaluations of LMI projects in close consultation with USAID Missions and the EGAT/OI&E office. The main purpose of the impact evaluations is to gather and share lessons from ongoing projects, help shape ongoing and future activities and contribute to broader knowledge management efforts.

## ***Implementation***

### **Impact Assessment Framework**

Going beyond traditional monitoring and evaluation approaches to ICT projects, the overall assessment framework developed for this activity is meant to capture evidence of impacts by using an appropriate mix of cost-effective tools and methodologies. At least two in-depth impact evaluations are expected to be completed within this phase of the project extending from October 2005 to October 2007.

A key implementation strategy for these assessments is to work with institutional partners who have relevant sectoral and country expertise.

### **First LMI Country Evaluation - Peru**

The first LMI country selected for this activity was Peru, one of the six countries selected to participate in the inaugural year of LMI. In Peru, Alexius International and Voxiva are working to establish micro-telcos in underserved areas.

### Partners

Under dot-ORG's oversight, the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP), a Peruvian research organization and the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California (USC) are working together to implement the impact evaluation in Peru.

Under the umbrella of activities undertaken by the LMI Innovation Committee and in coordination with the LMI Impact Assessment, the Georgia Tech Research Corporation is undertaking field research around the LMI Peru activity. This research focuses on the telecommunication and information needs of health workers. It is expected that the research findings will contribute to the overall objective of the impact assessment activity.

### Assessment Questions

Key questions to be answered through the assessment in the Peru LMI activities include:

- What concrete indications are there that LMI capabilities have contributed or will contribute to: 1) Economic growth – specifically, to private businesses – at the community level; 2) Better functioning of local government; 3) Social sectors (education, health, agriculture extension)?

- What is the evidence regarding the sustainability and profitability of the micro-telcos?
- Is the franchise model successful?
- What is the potential for the pilots to be scaled up?
- Is the technology working as anticipated? How well? How effective is the technology?
- To what extent has the technology increased access to telecommunications for the community? Who has benefited most from improved access?
- How has the existing policy and regulatory framework impacted the project? What has been the impact of the project on the policy and regulatory framework (if any)?

These assessment questions are being further defined in terms of specific indicators.

#### Overall Methodology

Project impact will be measured through a longitudinal research design. The design will include pre-test and post-test measurement on the same sample as well as a self-administered system for ongoing formative evaluation.

The baseline data collection (pre-test) aims at assessing the demand for specific data and voice communication and information services, and the characteristics of the communities served. Baseline data collection is not only essential for impact analysis, but it will also help the micro-telcos understand the needs of the communities they serve.

Ongoing monitoring (formative evaluation) will be useful for the micro-telcos to adjust to changing conditions but also to understand the prospects for long-term sustainability.

Finally, the research design will provide evidence of impact on social and economic indicators by comparing pre-test and post-test measurements on households, local businesses, local government, national government local offices and health institutions.

#### Research Methods

- The research plan includes both qualitative (structured interviews) and quantitative (survey questionnaires) instruments.
- Three measurements will be taken (pre-test/baseline, 2<sup>nd</sup> measurement at month 6, post-test at month 10).

Knowledge sharing activities will be an integral part of the project's implementation and an ongoing process rather than an end-of-project activity.

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#### ***More on the DOT-COM website***

- LMI Impact Assessment [Activity page](#)
- LMI Impact Assessment - [Baseline Report for Peru](#) – January 2006
- dot-ORG's [overview of LMI Activities](#)



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