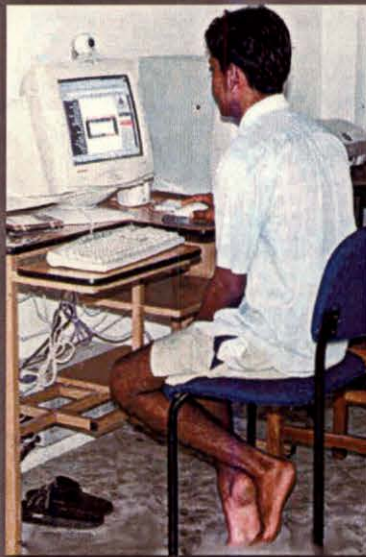


# Summary Annual Report 2003

# Information and Communications for Rural Communities (InforCom)

November 2002 - October 2003



The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT, its Spanish acronym) is one of 16 food and environmental research organizations known as the Future Harvest centers. The centers, located around the world, conduct research in partnership with farmers, scientists, and policymakers to help alleviate poverty and increase food security while protecting the natural resource base. The Future Harvest centers are principally funded through the 58 countries, private foundations, and regional and international organizations that make up the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

In 2002, CIAT received support from the following donor countries: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

Our work was also financed by the following organizations and foundations: the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Union (EU), Fundación Polar, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Kellogg Foundation, the Nippon Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Wallace Foundation, and the World Bank.

CIAT also receives funds for research and development services provided under contract to a growing number of institutional clients.

Information and conclusions reported in this document do not necessarily reflect the position of any donor agency.

# **Summary Annual Report 2003**

***Information and Communications for  
Rural Communities (InforCom)***

**Project SN-4**

**November 2002 – October 2003**



## **Project SN-4: Information and Communications for Rural Communities**

**Objective:** To strengthen rural communities' capacity for innovation by better enabling them to obtain, generate, and share information and knowledge, with the aid of modern information and communications technologies (ICTs).

### **Outputs:**

1. Computer-based distance-education (e-learning) programs, multimedia products on CD-ROM, and printed materials that convey science-based knowledge and methods in forms that are useful for development professionals
2. Proven approaches and tools for finding and obtaining agricultural information, especially via the Web
3. Community telecenter models for providing connectivity and building local capacity to use ICTs for rural innovation
4. Approaches for creating a local culture of knowledge discovery and sharing, with the aid of new ICTs linked to other communications media
5. Approaches for stimulating the development of local content that is relevant to rural innovation

### **Milestones:**

- 2004 Efforts under way in Colombia, at least one other Andean country, and in two Central American countries to incorporate the use of ICTs into rural development, with particular emphasis on support for small agroenterprises. Four e-learning courses completed and at least one multimedia training tool under development. New collaborative arrangements established in Colombia for improving access to agricultural information.
- 2005 Regional projects on ICTs for development under way in Latin America and East Africa. Local information systems and communications groups created and operating in both those regions. Further e-learning courses and multimedia products developed.

**Users:** The primary users of the project's outputs will be development professionals and community leaders associated with local organizations (particularly farmer groups, NGOs, and rural schools). These persons will acquire new tools and approaches that better enable them to help rural people create useful knowledge and improve services needed for solving problems and acting on new opportunities in agriculture.

**Collaborators:** SN-4 is building alliances with various international organizations that support the use of ICTs for development, including Canada's Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA), Fundación Chasquinet (a Latin American initiative based in Ecuador), and the global Association for Progressive Communication (APC). In addition to profiting from these organizations' experience and expertise, CIAT can tap into their networks of local partners in developing countries.

**CGIAR system linkages:** Training (30%); Information (60%); Organization and Management (5%); Networks (5%).

**CIAT project linkages:** SN-4 will provide all Center projects with new means of increasing research impact and obtaining feedback on research products from rural people. The project should be particularly useful to CIAT's new Rural Innovation Institute (RII) as a means of strengthening participatory approaches to agroenterprise development, local adaptive research, community-based watershed management and rural planning.

## SN-4 Project Log Frame (2004-2006): Information and Communications for Rural Communities

(Nathan Russell, project manager)

Narrative summary	Measurable Indicators	Means of verification	Important assumptions
<p><b>Goal</b> To help the rural poor build sustainable livelihoods by improving the flow of genuinely relevant information among rural communities and research and development (R&amp;D) organizations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased occurrence of technical and social innovation in target rural communities.</li> <li>• Increased opportunities for off-farm activities that generate income and employment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact evaluation within a sustainable livelihoods framework, based on household surveys, interviews with key informants, and group techniques in target rural communities.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Purpose</b> To strengthen rural communities' capacity for innovation by better enabling them to obtain, generate, and share information and knowledge, with the aid of modern information and communications technologies (ICTs).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New options for enhancing livelihoods identified by individuals and organizations in rural communities through improved information access.</li> <li>• Stronger planning and problem-solving capacities in rural communities, based on improved electronic communications both among communities and with R&amp;D organizations.</li> <li>• A greater capacity in local organizations to satisfy information demand in rural communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies on the use of information obtained with the aid of ICTs in target rural communities.</li> <li>• Impact evaluation of Web-based information applications developed by local organizations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural communities can obtain affordable, reliable access to the Internet.</li> <li>• National and local organizations commit themselves to providing rural communities with relevant information services.</li> <li>• Rural communities prove receptive to a new information culture based on the use of modern ICTs.</li> <li>• Systems for continuous monitoring and evaluation adopted by organizations hosting rural community telecenters.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outputs</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Computer-based distance-education (e-learning) programs, multimedia products on CD-ROM, and printed materials that convey science-based knowledge and methods in forms that are useful for development professionals.</li> <li>2. Proven approaches and tools for finding and obtaining agricultural information, especially via the Web.</li> <li>3. Community telecenter models for providing connectivity and building a local capacity to use ICTs for rural innovation.</li> <li>4. Approaches for creating a local culture of knowledge discovery and sharing, with the aid of new ICTs linked to other communications media.</li> <li>5. Approaches for stimulating the development of local content that is relevant to rural innovation.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-learning programs under way and multimedia products available to partners.</li> <li>• Diverse clients (from researchers to telecenter operators) more effectively obtaining information and using it in their work.</li> <li>• Financially and socially sustainable telecenters established by local organizations, with the aid of training tools developed by CIAT.</li> <li>• Local communications groups formed in target communities and providing effective information services to rural communities.</li> <li>• Dynamic, Web-based information systems (integrated with conventional communications media) developed by local organizations that have received training and other support from the Center.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-line evaluation of e-learning programs.</li> <li>• Training tools available in print form and on CD-ROM.</li> <li>• Locally developed information systems available on the World Wide Web.</li> <li>• Consultancy reports and project information on the Web and in print form.</li> <li>• Conference papers, journal articles, and technical reports on the performance and impact of approaches developed by the project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public and private telecommunications agencies support initiatives to create affordable, reliable Internet access in remote rural areas.</li> <li>• National and local organizations can generate resources through information services that enable them to sustain these services.</li> <li>• National and local organizations gain credibility in rural communities as reliable providers of useful Web-based information services.</li> </ul>

# **Summary Annual Report 2003**

## ***Information and Communications for Rural Communities (InforCom), SN-4***

### **Project Staff**

Nathan Russell (50%), Project Manager and Head, Communications Unit (CU)  
Edith Hesse (30%), Head, Information and Documentation Unit (IDU)  
Dora Patricia Arévalo, Research Assistant  
Rebeca Bolaños (30%), Secretary  
David Brand, Economist  
Eduardo Figueroa (50%), Training Specialist  
Jorge Gallego (25%), Systems Engineer  
Luz Marina Gómez, Research Assistant  
Odilia Mayorga, Research Assistant  
Mariano Mejía (30%), Library Public Service Coordinator  
Erika Mosquera, Communications Student  
Liliana Mosquera, Economist  
Olga Patricia Paz, Research Assistant (left during the year)  
Silvia Andrea Pérez, Communications Assistant  
Martha Cecilia Sarria, Community Facilitator  
Simone Staiger (25%), Web Publishing Coordinator  
Diana Paola Valero (25%), Graphic Designer

**Note:** Staff for whom no percentage is indicated worked full-time for InforCom.

### **Project Partners**

- Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca (ACIN), Santander de Quilichao, Cauca, Colombia
- Association for Progressive Communication (APC), through Colnodo (NGO), Bogotá, Colombia
- Consorcio Interinstitucional para una Agricultura Sostenible en Laderas (CIPASLA), Caldono, Cauca, Colombia
- Corporación Colombiana de Investigación Agropecuaria (CORPOICA)
- Corporación para el Desarrollo de Tunía (Corpotunía), Piendamó, Cauca, Colombia
- Corporación Universitaria Autónoma de Occidente (CUAO), Cali, Colombia
- Fundación Chasquinet, Quito, Ecuador
- International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), Office for the Americas, Colombia
- Red de Instituciones Vinculadas a la Capacitación en Economía y Políticas Agrícolas en América Latina y el Caribe (REDCAPA), Brazil
- Universidad Nacional, Colombia

**Note:** Within CIAT, InforCom collaborated actively with the Rural Agroenterprise Development and Impact Assessment Projects in research on telecenters, communications groups, and local information systems. Work on e-learning was done in collaboration with the Genetic Resources, Rural Agroenterprise, and Land Use Projects.

## Financial Resources

### Budget 2003

#### Project SN-4: Information and Communications for Rural Communities

Source	Amount (US\$)	Proportion (%)
Unrestricted Core	151,958	76
Restricted Core	0	0
Carry over from 2002	11,730	6
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>163,688</b>	<b>82</b>
Special Projects	36,593	18
<b>Total Project</b>	<b>200,281</b>	<b>100</b>

## Research Highlights

In its first full year of operations, the InforCom Project defined a cogent strategy for developing international public goods aimed at strengthening the capacity of rural communities and R&D organizations to obtain, generate, and share information, with the aid of new information and communications technologies (ICTs). The strategy consists of the five central components listed below, which encompass a broad continuum of information and communications functions, from international and national organizations to rural communities:

1. **From research results to development resources**—e-learning programs and multimedia training tools
2. **Better access to global information and knowledge**—proven approaches and tools for finding and obtaining materials on the Web
3. **Local use of ICTs for rural innovation**—models for developing community telecenters to provide connectivity and build local capacity in ICT use
4. **Local communications groups**—a community-based approach for creating a local culture of information use
5. **Local information systems**—an approach for stimulating the development of local content relevant to rural innovation

Building on previous experience, InforCom made significant progress, as spelled out in the highlights below, in pursuing all five components of its strategy. For more detailed information, see the full project annual report.

### **E-learning**

Early in the year, the project embarked on a new venture in distance education. We chose a computer-mediated approach, or e-learning, for this purpose because of its distinct advantages over other options. E-learning lends itself more readily than videoconferencing, for example, to life-long learning for busy professionals, who may



lack the time or money to participate in courses involving specific time commitments and travel to remote locations.

With e-learning students are accompanied by experienced tutors, who facilitate the process. The experience is further enriched by discussions among students through a virtual campus, which is accessible to students, tutors, and experts invited to cover specific topics in the course. Students may access lessons and discussions in the virtual campus from Internet cafés, community telecenters, universities, or home computers, and they can download study materials and discussions.

To speed the incorporation of e-learning into CIAT's work, we chose REDCAPA as our partner. Headquartered in Brazil, this NGO has 8 years of experience in computer-mediated distance education. The head of the IDU and supervisor of library public services first established a representative working group of CIAT staff and then organized a 10-day e-learning consultancy with REDCAPA's director. This included a 3-day workshop, which was attended by 40 CIAT staff. The consultant also conducted interviews with 40 staff, which resulted in a list of 37 possible topics for e-learning courses.

Based on the outcomes of this consultancy, the working group recommended that we concentrate on just a few courses initially, particularly on one—Ex-situ Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources and Management of Germplasm Banks—that had already been organized several times, in conventional fashion, by CIAT and IPGRI at CIAT headquarters. We decided to go about developing the course as a joint venture with Colombia's Universidad Nacional, IPGRI, and REDCAPA. Preparations for this course are well under way, and individuals from each institution are participating enthusiastically.

### **Multimedia training tools**

The project completed its first multimedia training tool this year. Based on the experience of a recently completed project (InforCauca), the tool—called *Telecentros Comunitarios: Una Estrategia para Promover el Uso de las Nuevas Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación (TIC) para el Desarrollo Sostenible en Zonas Marginales*—offers recommendations and advice on telecenter development. It also provides details about the telecenters and organizations that InforCauca supported, with funding from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Rockefeller Foundation. *Telecentros Comunitarios* presents this material in an engaging and interactive manner through a combination of brief, interestingly written Spanish-language texts, animation, photos, and other elements.

The product was launched at Colombia's Second National Telecenter Workshop, which CIAT organized with two local partners and hosted at Center headquarters in early October 2003. *Telecentros Comunitarios* will be distributed to workshop participants, and it will be publicized in Colombia through Colnodo (an NGO partner that promotes the use of ICTs for development) and elsewhere in Latin America through the Fundación Chasquinet, which coordinates the regional telecenter network Somos@Telecentros. Local partners in Colombia plan to use the tool for promoting telecenter development through meetings with municipal government officials and NGOs.

### ***Information access***

Over the last couple of years or so, the CIAT Web site has proved effective for broadening access to information about our research and its results and products. Statistics on use of the Web site during 2003 show a steady increase in the total number of visits to the site per month, which reached 133,000 in September, up from just over 80,000 in January.

Even so, filling Web sites with on-line scientific information does not by itself guarantee that users will be able to find the material they want and make good use of it. Key scientific information resources must be promoted among specific user groups and training provided in the use of these tools. To help meet those needs, InforCom offered a series of workshops in 2003, which contributed importantly to the capacity of close partners in Colombia and heightened their awareness of information resources available through CIAT.

The project also supported initiatives, such as the CGIAR's InfoFinder Project, involving the use of metadata, with multilingual keywords, to facilitate access to information across language barriers. In addition, we helped conceive and implement a project in collaboration with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), Cornell University in the USA, and the Rockefeller Foundation, aimed at making scientific journals readily available to the world's poorest nations. In connection with this work, the World Bank commissioned CIAT to carry out a consultancy in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda to assess the capability of libraries to access on-line scientific information resources.

### ***Community telecenters***

When the InforCom Project was created last year as part of CIAT's Rural Innovation Institute (RII), previous work on community telecenters was incorporated into this new communications and information endeavor. As InforCauca came to an end (June 2003), we placed particular emphasis on evaluating the impact of the three telecenters supported by the project and on implementing a strategy to achieve telecenter sustainability.

That strategy depends on three key elements: (1) income for services, (2) support from host organizations, and (3) funds generated through the development of local projects involving ICT use. Four months after the close of InforCauca and the end of donor support, all three telecenters are operating and show reasonably good signs of achieving financial sustainability. Income for services, however, covers no more than about half the total costs of operating the telecenter (in some cases less). Interestingly, the host organizations have proved willing to pick up the rest of the costs. And some have been remarkably successful in obtaining funds for their own projects involving the telecenter operators and services.

These outcomes are closely related to some of the main conclusions of the impact evaluation. At the outset of the project, we expected impact to come chiefly from the decisions and actions of individual telecenter users. Contrary to our expectations, the most notable impacts can be seen within the organizations hosting the telecenters. One of them, for example, ACIN, has used the telecenter to develop and manage externally funded projects more efficiently, to improve information flows

between its headquarters and remote indigenous reserves, to strengthen its ties with other organizations within and beyond Colombia, and to bring attention to gross human rights abuses against indigenous leaders and communities, among other purposes. In effect, the telecenter has served as a kind of communications unit for ACIN, and this helps explain why the latter is now willing, in effect, to subsidize telecenter operations.

Use of the telecenter by the surrounding communities, in contrast, is still rather limited. The telecenter at Tunía, for example, which is hosted by a rural development NGO (Corpotunía), has been used by only 25% of the local population. Users tend to be younger and better educated than nonusers. And they frequent the telecenter mainly for computer training, to obtain general information (related to school assignments, for example), or to communicate with friends and relatives. Cases of individuals obtaining technical or economic information for use in development-related decisions are still relatively scarce.

### **Local communications groups**

To find means of enhancing the development impact of telecenter services through increased use in the community of information directly related to agriculture, the InforCom Project embarked last year on new endeavors that complement our support for the telecenters. One involves the formation of communications groups (each consisting of 8 to 10 people, mainly members of farm households) within or in association with community-based organizations.

CIAT experience has shown that farmer groups can learn to carry out valid research and develop successful agroenterprises, thus promoting an experimental and entrepreneurial culture in rural communities. Thus, it should also be possible for groups of farmer-communicators to learn to obtain and share useful information, based on community needs, thus fomenting a local culture of knowledge discovery. If successful, these groups could provide a useful support service for local research and agroenterprise development.

To explore that possibility, InforCom has pursued two closely related lines of research over the last year. First, under a 1-year project developed by Corpotunía with funds from the Instituto Colombiano para el Desarrollo de la Ciencia y la Tecnología (Colciencias), we are supporting efforts to develop *grupos gestores de comunicación* within five community-based organizations (e.g., an association of organic coffee producers) operating in central Cauca.

The idea is to determine whether and under what conditions these groups can be trained to build and share—through information acquisition and communication—the knowledge their organizations need to solve specific problems or seize particular opportunities. Toward this end the groups have been receiving training since early 2003 on the following topics: introduction to communications, organizational strengthening, project planning and development, basic computer programs, and the use of diverse communications media.

In related work, supported initially by IDRC and Rockefeller and now with InforCom core funds, we are helping form three other groups of farmer-communicators in three municipalities of northern Cauca. Group members are

connected with various *panela* (brown sugar) producer associations scattered across the region. The aim is to establish whether and how these groups can acquire the capacity to provide an effective information support service for the *panela* industry (as a pilot case) and subsequently for small agroenterprises dealing with the region's other main value-added products. For this purpose the groups received intensive training this year in community organization, teamwork, use of the Internet, Web site development, and the development and implementation of communications work plans.

### **Local information systems**

Just as groups of farmer-researchers share an experimental plot, farmer-communicators need a joint information product to provide a focal point for their learning process. A central assumption of our work with the communications groups in Cauca is that a Web-based information system can serve that and related purposes particularly well. Thus, in 2003 we worked closely with the three communications groups in northern Cauca to develop an on-line Information System for Rural Agroenterprise Development (or SIDER, its acronym in Spanish).

Why an on-line system, given that few producers and processors have access to the Internet and are inclined or able to use it? One compelling reason is that an on-line system can easily be updated, as the communications groups glean new information from both local and distant sources. Another is that, as we have seen in the development of CIAT's own Web site, a relatively complex Web-based system lends itself to decentralized development, so it is a good vehicle for involving group members directly in the process.

To overcome the problem of limited Internet access, the communications groups are being trained to analyze and use a wide range of other more conventional or traditional media, such as community radio, simple printed items, community assemblies, and so forth. Through these media group members will be able to channel information available in the on-line system to a wide audience in their communities.

What kinds of information will aspiring entrepreneurs obtain through this process? The SIDER consists of five components: (1) a price information service, (2) general information resources on agroenterprise development, (3) detailed information about the region's main value-added products, (4) a section including other information about the region, developed by the communications groups, and (5) an explanation of the SIDER process. Gathering and organizing all this information has proved to be slow but is now well advanced. Part of the difficulty is that many of the actors (group members and local organizations) have had to learn new skills and acquire new habits of documentation.

### **Problems Encountered**

The lack of full-time project leadership continues to handicap InforCom somewhat. Ideally, at least one senior staff member should be dedicated exclusively to project development and fund-raising. But instead, the heads of the CU and IDU must maintain a balance between those tasks and their continuing responsibilities for CIAT's communications and information services.

Despite this handicap InforCom made good progress during 2003 in laying the groundwork for new projects in Central America and East Africa. And as described under "Research Highlights" above, our activities in Colombia yielded worthwhile results. These serve as a source of ideas for new projects and give CIAT credibility as a potential international player in seeking effective ICT applications for rural innovation.

### **Plans for 2004**

- Four e-learning courses will be carried out, covering the following topics: ex-situ conservation of plant genetic resources and gene bank management, three-dimensional participatory mapping, production chains as tools for linking smallholders to markets, and entrepreneurial orientation and market fundamentals.
- Having developed its first multimedia training tool in 2003, InforCom will promote the use of this tool in Latin America, identify suitable topics for further products of this type, and proceed with the development of one or more promising candidates in 2004.
- The project will establish new collaborative arrangements with Colombia's Universidad Nacional, CORPOICA, and other organizations aimed at strengthening the national agricultural information network. A project proposal for this purpose will be developed for consideration by a new World Bank-funded project on rural diversification.
- InforCom will work with other CIAT staff to develop an ICT/knowledge management project for the CGIAR.
- Based on the outcomes of the InforCauca Project, InforCom will consolidate and extend its work with community telecenters and related initiatives in Colombia by expanding its alliance with local partners. Negotiations are already under way, for example, with the Universidad del Cauca.
- As described below under "Resource Mobilization," InforCom will seek to establish "learning alliances" with organizations in selected countries of Central America, the Andean Zone, and East Africa that are exploring the use of ICTs in support of agroenterprise development and related aspects of rural innovation. Efforts in 2004 will follow up on contacts and consultations made this year with CIAT staff and potential partners in those regions. The main purpose of our learning alliances will be to combine CIAT's experience and results with those of partner organizations, with a view to identifying good practices that can be adapted to diverse circumstances.

## **Project Performance Indicators**

### ***Rural development approaches***

InforCom completed development of a generic approach to the establishment of financially and socially sustainable community telecenters, which are hosted by local organizations and provide access to ICTs as well as training in their use.

The project also embarked on the development of two closely related approaches—one involving community-based communications groups and the other Web-based local information systems—designed to enhance the direct impact of the telecenters on specific groups of ICT users in rural communities.

In addition, InforCom made a start toward designing a suitable approach whereby CIAT can enrich training activities through e-learning programs developed in collaboration with national and international partners.

### ***Decision-support tools***

InforCom staff developed a multimedia training guide this year—called *Telecentros Comunitarios: Una Estrategia para Promover el Uso de las Nuevas Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación (TIC) para el Desarrollo Sostenible en Zonas Marginales*—which is available on CD-ROM and offers recommendations and advice on telecenter development.

### ***Publications and presentations***

- CIAT (Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical). 2003. *Telecentros comunitarios: Una estrategia para promover el uso de las nuevas tecnologías de información y comunicación (TIC) para el desarrollo sostenible en zonas marginales* [CD-ROM]. Cali, Colombia. 1 CD.
- Hesse, E. 2003. Educación a distancia mediada por computadora. Presented at Seminario introductorio para los tutores del Curso: Conservación Ex-Situ de Recursos Fitogenéticos y Manejo de Bancos de Germoplasma. Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), Cali, Colombia, 17 de octubre de 2003.
- Hesse, E. 2003. Promoviendo los servicios de información agropecuaria y rural en las Américas: El papel estratégico de las bibliotecas. Presented at II Taller Estratégico de Coordinadores del SIDALC, San José, Costa Rica, marzo 20 y 21 de 2003.
- Hesse, E. 2003. Rules and tools behind the scene: The role of libraries in knowledge sharing. In: Pachico, D. (ed.). *Scaling up and out: Achieving widespread impact through agricultural research*. Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), Cali, Colombia. (In press)
- Hesse, E. 2003. Scientific information access: Evolving roles of libraries. Presented at 11 East African institutions in the context of a consultancy commissioned by the World Bank in June 2003.
- Hesse, E. 2003. Scientific publishing and copyright: The role of researchers and libraries. Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), Cali, Colombia. (CIAT Seminar Series, February 2003)

- Hesse, E. 2003. Update on TEEAL: The essential electronic agricultural library. Presented at CGIAR Information Managers' 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, The Hague, September 15-18, 2003.
- Hesse, E.; Mejía Marmolejo, M. 2003. Bibliotecas virtuales y derecho de autor: Experiencias recientes del CIAT. Paper presented at XIII Reunión Interamericana de Bibliotecarios, Documentalistas y Especialistas en Información Agrícola, Ciudad La Antigua, Guatemala, 22-26 de septiembre de 2003. (To be published in Revista AIBDA)
- Holland, D.; Ashby, J.; Mejía Marmolejo, M. 2003. Growing social research in CIAT, 1968-2002. (To be published by CABI)
- Russell, N. 2003. InforCauca: A pilot project on community telecenters. Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), Cali, Colombia. (CIAT Seminar Series, September 2003)
- Russell, N. 2003. Is there an "e" in scaling up? Lessons from a community telecenter in southwestern Colombia. *In: Pachico, D. (ed.). Scaling up and out: Achieving widespread impact through agricultural research.* Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), Cali, Colombia. (In press)

In addition, InforCom staff supported the development by a local partner (CUAO) of an approximately 20-minute documentary video dealing with the educational potential of community telecenters. The video will be presented in November at the Segundo Festival Educativo y Cultural in Madrid, Spain.

Project staff also made three formal presentations of InforCom at various symposia in Colombia and four informal presentations to potential local partners or supporters in Colombia, including the country's first lady, Doña Lina de Uribe.

### **Training courses**

- Three workshops on accessing electronic sources of agricultural information at Colombia's Universidad Nacional-Palmira, CUAO, and CORPOICA.
- Two training workshops for telecenter operators and other staff of local partner organizations in Colombia, one on basic graphic design concepts and another on agricultural information services and resources relevant to rural communities.
- A workshop on how to use controlled vocabulary for better access to Web-based resources for information managers in CIAT projects.
- Several training workshops for members of community-based communications groups on the following topics: introduction to communications, group organization, organizational communications, formation of social networks, project planning and design, basic computer programs, use of various communications media (e.g., radio, video, and printed products), Web site development, and design and implementation of communications strategies.

### **Workshops**

- Organized and hosted Colombia's Second National Community Telecenters Workshop at CIAT headquarters (80 participants).
- Participated in the Second Regional Telecenter Workshop, organized by the Fundación Chasquinat at Quito, Ecuador.

- With REDCAPA organized a workshop on computer-mediated distance learning for CIAT staff and selected partners.
- Organized the participation of Colombian telecenter operators in the following events:
  - Workshop on Support Networks for Indigenous Peoples of the Americas in the framework of the II Annual National Forum on Connectivity for Canadians at Ottawa, Canada.
  - VI Taller de Redes Internet para América Latina y el Caribe in Mérida, Venezuela.
  - Conéctate, Primer Encuentro de Informática de los Niños y Niñas de Colombia, in Bogotá, Colombia.

### ***Students***

A communications student at the CUAO is carrying out a practicum, in which she provides communications support for the above-mentioned SIDER.

### ***Assistance***

InforCom staff provided weekly assistance to three community telecenters, based on telecenter work plans, as well as on-site training in Web site development. They also made nearly weekly visits in support of a total of eight community-based communications groups in northern and central Cauca, with a combined membership of more than 80 people.

### ***Resource mobilization***

The InforCom project submitted a grant proposal (for US\$350,000 over 2 years) to the competitive Incubator Initiative of the World Bank's InfoDev Program, but it was not among the proposals selected.

Project staff also submitted a concept note to the Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica (BCIE) for a large and ambitious ICT project (with a budget of about \$2.5 million over 4 years), but it was not approved for proposal development.

As an active member of the Colombian Agricultural Information Network (RIDAC, its Spanish acronym), CIAT supported CORPOICA in developing a concept note for a project aimed at strengthening the national information network. In 2004 we will explore the possibility of obtaining funds for this work through a new World Bank-funded project on rural diversification.

InforCom contributed to the development of several proposals under preparation for the CGIAR's ICT/Knowledge Management investment plan.

The project also collaborated with FAO and the University of Florida, USA, in developing a concept note for an agricultural ontology project that would permit us to update CIAT's cassava thesaurus. The donor to which this note was submitted did not express interest, however.

In addition, we developed a concept note for a project in Central America, which would complement an agroenterprises project approved recently by IDRC's Minga Program. We are currently modifying this concept note, based on feedback



from an IDRC program officer. Another concept note for a project in eastern Africa is being reviewed by CIAT agroenterprise staff in the region.

Finally, InforCom played an active role in the development of two major initiatives, which we hope will bring significant resources to the project in 2004. One of these was Learning to Innovate, which is among three CIAT “collaborative efforts to attack poverty through rural innovation and environmental reconstruction.” The other was Putting Knowledge to Work, a project being developed in collaboration with CABI and for which the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has “pipelined” funds.

***Impact evaluation***

As mentioned above under “Research Highlights,” InforCom placed particular emphasis this year on evaluating the impact of the InforCauca community telecenters project. For this purpose a baseline survey of 445 households was carried out in two rural communities; interviews were conducted with focus groups consisting of telecenter users; and studies of institutional impacts were carried out in two organizations hosting rural telecenters.

