What makes a SchoolNet successful and sustainable?

CHAPTER 5
5. What makes a SchoolNet successful and sustainable?

The experiences over the past 10 years show that for SchoolNets to be successful in achieving their goals, and to be sustainable in the long term, schools need to have:

- Political and financial commitment.
- Conducive policy and an appropriate curriculum.
- Support from management.
- Adequate infrastructure.
- Sufficient quantity of affordable ICT tools and digital learning resources.
- Teachers who are trained in how to utilize computers and the Internet in the classroom.
- Ongoing, well-organized SchoolNet activities.
- Enthusiastic teachers and students who actively participate in SchoolNet activities.
- Trained technical staff for maintenance and repair of equipment.
- Accessible (local or telephone) trouble-shooting support.

With these components in place, SchoolNets can be effective in facilitating access by teachers and students to the wealth of information and resources available online and thereby contribute to improving the reach and quality of education.

The experiences so far also show that in order to encompass all of these components, a network of schools needs:

- A coordinating body which supports and guides activities.
- Co-operation (partnerships) between all stakeholders: policy makers, school administrators, head teachers, teachers, students, teacher trainers, and technical experts.
- Mechanisms for ensuring sufficient funding, and affordable equipment and other resources.
- Mechanisms for training school staff and technical support teams.
- Regular SchoolNet telecollaboration activities.

“... factors that have hindered ICT use in education for the past many years ... include the inadequacy of basic infrastructure, hardware and software; lack of connectivity and systematic management support; high Internet fees; and lack of a sense of ownership on the part of the schools. The selected policy strategy is not always in linear correspondence with these factors.”

Harina Yuhetty, Ministry of National Education, Indonesia, 2004

“... a “total cost of ownership” model ... ensures long-term internet access, technical maintenance, repair, training and support services to schools provided with ICT equipment, running Free/Libre and Open Source software and content solutions under Creative Commons licencing.”

Joris Komen, Director, SchoolNet Namibia, 2005