

Strategic Framework 2006-2010

Making the Most of Experience in ICTs for Development

The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) is a well respected organisation in the field of Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) and has a strong track record in using ICTs to alleviate poverty in the developing world. These were the findings of a formal evaluation carried out by the Dutch Directorate-General for International Cooperation in 2005. For the period 2006-2010 IICD will focus on becoming an expertise knowledge-based organisation in the field of ICT4D. Throughout this period it will promote awareness about ICTs as a development tool, share the lessons learned with the international development community, and develop strategic partnerships with organisations from the private, public and non-profit sector.

Founded in 1997, IICD is a non-profit foundation that specialises in ICT for development. IICD's mission is "to assist developing countries in the use of ICT as a strategic tool for sustainable development and poverty alleviation". IICD has shifted from being a project-focused organisation to a programme-focused organisation, with a strong emphasis on having a wider impact on poverty alleviation through policy change based on Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). IICD's approach to ICT includes both traditional (radio, television and telephones) and modern (computers and the Internet) technologies – it is not the technology itself that is important, but whether or not it is used appropriately and if it is sustainable.

The approach of IICD is based on two types of activities: Country Programmes and Thematic Networks. Country Programmes bring organisations from a country together and strengthen 'local' institutional capacities to formulate and execute ICT supported development policies and projects. Thematic Networks collect ICT4D experience and link local organisations and the international community working in similar areas; connecting local knowledge with global knowledge. Currently IICD is active in nine countries: Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Ghana, Jamaica, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

In the past, the IICD 'Roundtable process' of generating ICT projects and policies normally began with a Roundtable workshop. Today, the starting point is to identify and work with a small network of committed local organisations. IICD learned early on that ownership of projects should remain with project partners, with the emphasis on operational and financial independence. IICD's assistance does not end with helping local partners to formulate policy and implement projects, but focuses also on building the

institutional capacities of these partners and using the evidence base to promote ICTs at the policy level. Through experience IICD has found that working with small networks is key to strengthening local institutional capacities and those of local partners to develop and manage projects.

Throughout the process of executing projects and policies, local partners are empowered to make effective use of ICTs as a tool for development and to mainstream ICTs into key development sectors. IICD specialises in five sectors: livelihoods (particularly agriculture), health, education, good governance and environment. IICD supports local partners with ICT training and education (capacity development), with Information exchange and Networking (IN) activities, and with a unique Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system. IICD's guiding principles greatly contribute to making its work effective and sustainable. For the strategic period of 2006-2010 IICD has added gender equality as an additional principle.



Priorities 2006-2010

For the strategic period 2006-2010, IICD intends to draw on the valuable experiences that it has stimulated and prove itself as an expertise organisation in the field of ICT4D. The organisation has built up a strong ICT4D knowledge base that continues to grow and from which lessons can be learned, shared and reinvested in existing work and new opportunities. In light of moving towards becoming an expertise organisation, IICD will make optimum use of this ICT4D knowledge base and therefore has identified three strategic priorities (embedding, harvesting and leveraging). All three are either already being translated into operational approaches or will begin this process as part of this strategic period.

Sustaining the potential of ICTs

IICD's wealth of experience has demonstrated that individual projects alone are not enough to sustain the full potential of ICTs for development in the long term. What is needed is a wider level of impact that broadens and deepens the ability to have a real (economic) impact on poverty alleviation. The sustainability of development through the use of ICTs is key to IICD's philosophy. With this approach in mind IICD has clearly identified that the sustainability and long-term potential of ICT4D depends on successfully incorporating ICTs at the project, organisational and policy level (embedding).

In order to lay a sound basis for incorporating ICTs, IICD focuses on achieving a critical mass of projects and knowledge exchange that has a strong evidence base which clearly demonstrates that ICTs are effective in all sectors. IICD will continue to do so in order to stimulate real impact on development and poverty alleviation.

The sustainability of projects and the incorporation of ICTs at several levels also depends on capacity within the country, thus IICD has a strong focus on capacity development. As such, IICD aims to strengthen two levels of capacities: individual capacities (skills and knowledge) and institutional capacities (internal structures and procedures and the collective capacities of the staff). These new skills are acquired through a series of Life-Long Learning workshops, peer-to-peer learning exchanges, Technical Update Seminars and Train-the-Trainer seminars. IICD continues to maintain a high level of capacity development by working with training partners in the country and entering into strategic alliances to complement local expertise and knowledge.

Learning from experience...

When IICD's Country Programmes began to expand, partners indicated that finding information on the status and impact of local ICT-enabled initiatives was difficult. Without opportunities to learn from other experiences, informed decision-making was problematic. Over and over again, the wheel was being reinvented and thus, scarce resources – be it human, financial and/or knowledge-wise – were being wasted. Partners thus identified an urgent need to set up effective tools and platforms where local ICT4D plans, progress, results and experiences can be discussed and assessed. Consequently, IICD acknowledged local Information exchange and Networking (IN) as a means of deepening the impact of its Country Programmes. Now IN has also become essential for the process of lobbying policy-makers in order to 'embed' the use of ICTs at a national level. These experiences along with the lessons learned are then disseminated through IICD's Monitoring and Evaluation function. During this strategic period IN will focus on strengthening multi-stakeholder networks in



the country through raising awareness, the exchange of experiences and influencing policy processes in the ICT4D arena.

... and sharing these experiences

After gathering experiences and lessons learned in the country, IICD is now able to collect and disseminate (harvesting) the results of its work. One significant way that evidence can be brought to the foreground is through IICD's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activities.

As IICD moves towards becoming an expertise organisation, its M&E system will become of increasing significance. The system has been fine-tuned over the last four years and is now achieving its purpose: learning through reflection by the local partners on the ground as well as at the level of IICD. This system will continue to develop according to the needs of local partners and IICD in general. A unique aspect of the M&E system is the fact that impact is measured at the level of the end user, where insights can be gained into the level of awareness, empowerment, economic impact and sector impact. Not only does the M&E system provide insights about the development impact and projects' success, but critically analyses the effectiveness of IICD's assistance to learn and develop as an organisation. IICD's application of how results and evidence can be translated into learning is clearly unique in the ICT4D field.

IICD has embarked on a number of ways to publish this evidence, significantly with a series of booklets highlighting development impact at process, country and sector level. In addition, IICD will continue to work with partners on sharing techniques and indicators for evaluating ICTs as a tool for development. The learning is already there; now it is about evidence.

Connecting and innovating

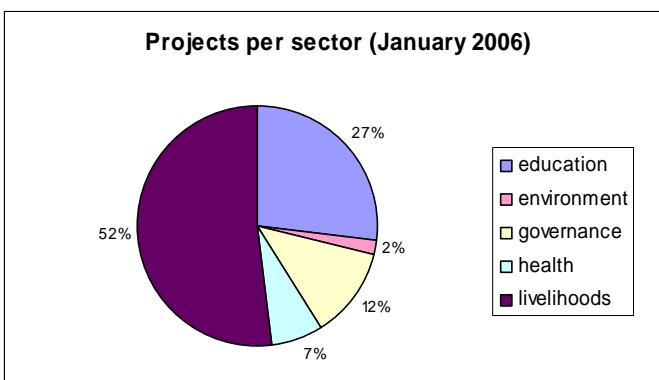
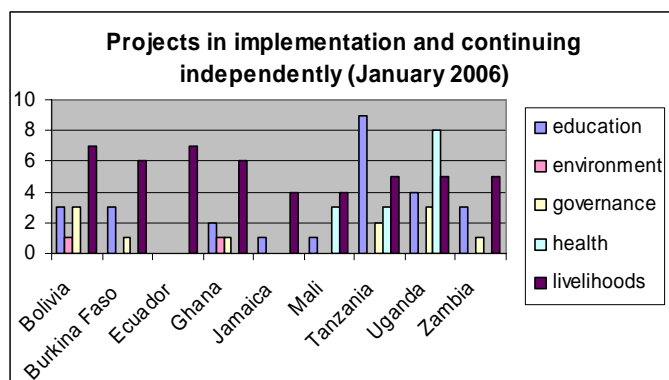
Thematic Networks, or communities of practice, are yet another way in which sector specific lessons, news and ideas are shared and disseminated across the countries where IICD is working. Each network supports IICD's local partners by bringing expertise and knowledge to them; and by providing a platform where their experiences can be shared more widely.

These Networks link practitioners and those interested in ICT4D, connecting local knowledge with global knowledge and promoting South-South and South-North exchanges, while focusing on IICD's five key sectors. By doing so, Thematic Networks contribute to IICD's base of expertise that can be reinvested in new and existing activities. Thematic Networks are a means to analyze and disseminate learning and accountability to a variety of target groups.

Thematic Networks remain interlinked with Country Programmes and therefore are focusing strongly on knowledge sharing, particularly on best practices. In practical terms, experiences and lessons learned are disseminated through media that is target specific, such as impact booklets, e-networks, advisory notes and advisory projects. Parallel to this, knowledge partner networks and cross-country learning events will also be organised to maximise learning and experience.

IICD maximised

It is becoming increasingly important to maximise IICD's existing resources in order to impact the ICT development agenda. IICD's unique combination of experience and learning-by-doing means that it has a comparative advantage from which to demonstrate and lift its work to a broader set of stakeholders (**leveraging**). IICD will begin to reap the richness of its knowledge and to develop its function as a strategic advisor for governments, international and Dutch



The IICD project portfolio is developed in cooperation with local and enabling partners. While IICD is active in five sectors, there is a clear emphasis on the livelihoods sector, in which the majority of projects involve the use of ICT applications in agriculture. Education is the second most active sector with 27 percent of projects. By the end of 2005, 36 percent of the projects were continuing independently after IICD funding ended. This means that these projects are incorporated within an institution or have been upscaled, in whole or in part, in new projects.

development organisations and local donor agencies through advising others and facilitating ICT4D knowledge sharing activities.

Expertise knowledge is one way that IICD can impact the ICT4D agenda. Bridging the gap between the private and public sector will become key to this approach and partnerships are a core part of the new strategy. IICD works with other Dutch NGOs and European Governments to increase understanding among policymakers and the public about the importance of ICTs in global development. In addition to deepening these relationships, IICD is engaging with private companies that can help meet the needs and demands of its partners in the South.

Knowledge-based strategic alliances with companies in the long term demonstrate how the non-profit sector and the private sector can work together. Through this cooperation all parties benefit; southern partners receive expert training in the latest technological advancements while private partners are challenged intellectually to develop new and innovative ICT solutions as well as supporting IICD with the development of new strategies for applying ICTs for development. Not only does the private sector company fulfil its corporate social responsibilities, but the solutions it develops can prove to be invaluable commercially in the long run. IICD is seeking to develop these public private partnerships and remains committed to welcoming public and private sector investment in order stimulate exciting opportunities.



IICD facts and figures (January 2006)

- IICD is a non-profit foundation, founded in 1997 by the Ministry of Development Cooperation. At IICD's head office in The Hague, Netherlands, there are 33 employees. Its main sponsors are the Dutch, Swiss and English departments for development cooperation. Other important partners are Dutch non-governmental institutions like Hivos, PSO and Cordaid.
- IICD works with partners in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Ghana, Jamaica, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.
- All activities are demand-driven and locally owned by partners in the South. Sixty percent of IICD's partners are grass-roots organisations and NGOs working directly with the poor at the community level.
- Most projects are in the livelihoods sector, followed by education, governance and health. IICD and its partners have 95 projects implemented. Out of the 95 projects, 26 have been able to continue independently from IICD on the basis of their own revenues or with the support of other funding agencies.
- IICD is participating in a number of policy processes in several countries.
- IICD supported the training of a total of 4,000 project team members in 2005.
- IICD estimates that its programmes have reached over 200,000 end-users directly and 2,500,000 end-users indirectly. The majority of our end-users are located in rural areas as most of our projects are in the livelihoods sector. In other sectors end-users are more or less equally divided over rural and urban areas.
- In 2005, project team members and end users have filled out 8,000 questionnaires. Seventy percent of the local partners were satisfied with IICD's direct assistance to the projects during project implementation.

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