

## Learning report Ecuador 2005 Evaluation role of IICD and capacity development

In 2005, Martha Nuñez started as Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) partner in Ecuador, where several IICD partners have been working on different parts of the Ecuador Country Programme since 2003. In January 2006, all project, training and network partners in the country came together in a Focus Group meeting to discuss the analyses of some 233 questionnaires that focussed on the role of IICD during formulation and implementation of the projects, as well as the capacity development that has been going on. The ideas and learning points in this report reflect on the results of the analyses and the discussions held during the Focus Group meeting.

### Role of IICD

In the questionnaires on project formulation and project implementation, project owners give their opinion on the role of IICD in these respective phases. With respect to the *formulation phase*, many project owners indicated that this type of process was new to them and that they were satisfied with the support given by the programme manager during this phase (14 out of 18 claimed to be (highly) satisfied). Project owners did stress that the formulation phase was very long and that they would have benefited from a more intense ICT-capacity building already during the formulation phase. This would have given them the possibility to avoid certain problems later on during the project's implementation phase. When a second group started the formulation phase of their (Governance) projects, a representative of one of the projects from the first group (Livelihoods projects) was invited to give them a course. By doing this, the second group could benefit from the lessons learned of the first group, something that was mentioned a lot in the questionnaires and highly valued by the project owners.

Satisfaction in the *implementation phase* for strategic support is very high. Operational support is also valued but answers by the project owners are more varied in this case. One of the things that became clear is that many projects are struggling with project management related challenges. Delays occur due to problems that were not yet foreseen during the formulation phase. Consultation of the (potential) stakeholders can cause such a delay. Project owners are however convinced that these consultations are necessary to see if the solution offered by the project is fit to the specific situation of the project users. Another important issue during implementation is the support the projects are receiving within their own organisation. Initial commitment of the organisation sometimes diminishes once implementation gets under way and people do not immediately see the

results of the project. Many times, it is hard to explain to directors the value of ICTs. Intervention from IICD with the directors of the organisations in question is then highly appreciated.



IICD's local M&E partner in Ecuador, Martha Nuñez (right), tries to capture the discussion after the Focus Group meeting.

Apart from the specific role that IICD fulfilled during the two phases mentioned earlier, all partners also reflected on the relationship they had with IICD and the expectations that they had towards IICD and the other partners. Some negative points that the partners came up with were the fact that IICD sometimes tends to overestimate the amount of technical knowledge that the partners have. Also, some improvements can be made in the area of internal coordination and making the roles of the team members of the Ecuador Country team clearer to the partners in the country. On the positive side, project owners value the flexibility and informality of IICD, the knowledge of the local situation and the fact that organisations can make project decisions on the basis of their own dynamics and priorities.

### Capacity Development

For trainings gender balance is a weak point. During the courses, only 32% of the participants of trainings were female. On the other hand, for seminars the number of male and female

participants is almost equal. Most people participating in the trainings were doing so to improve their skills to work with the computer or to be able to find and manage information by means of the computer. Since most of the participants are project team members, many also participate because they want to apply the gained knowledge in their project. 96% of the participants agree to have achieved their goals. Satisfaction rates for both trainings and seminars are extremely high: 96% of participants claimed to be (partially) satisfied with the content of the trainings. For the seminars this number was 98%.

Still, some things remain to be improved. One of those things is the way that train-the-trainer courses are approached. Train-the-trainer courses have the advantage of working with trainers that are aware of the local situation: this is especially the case for local intermediaries who live and work with the people in the rural parts of Ecuador. Also, train-the-trainer courses give the opportunity to train many people for a relatively low budget. A disadvantage of the train-the-trainer concept is that not everyone is capable of replicating the training to others. In order to improve this, project owners can help themselves by sending those people to a training who are capable to develop their replicating skills. Trainers on the other hand, can help by applying the "learning-by-doing" concept as much as possible to make it easier to absorb the issues dealt with during trainings. Another suggestion made was to have the participants of the training, instead of the trainer, prepare the cases for trainings. As such, people are trained according to their organisation's desired objectives. In the end, a training must be a cooperation between all parties involved. Also it is viewed important to, from the

beginning, always train more than one person so that the organisation will not lose out when people leave or get replaced. When a trained person does end up working somewhere else, this is definitely not considered a complete loss: the knowledge will get replicated but in a different environment.

Train-the-trainer courses will always have positive and negative points. It was therefore suggested that the project owners and trainers, when thinking about the training methodology make a mix between more formal and training-by-trainers:

*"While some things are best learned in practice, you always have to take into consideration the level of the participants and what kind of guide you need to get the best effect"* (participant of the Focus Group meeting).

#### **Follow up**

Shortly after the Focus Group meeting, the M&E partner attended a meeting for all the trainers affiliated to the IICD supported projects. In a presentation she reflected on the results and ideas generated during the Focus Group meeting. This was an opportunity to directly feed the ideas back to where they are most useful: the people that could use them to actually improve the trainings. At the end of 2006, the projects on sustainable livelihoods in Ecuador will analyse end user data for the first time and discuss these findings during a new Focus Group meeting.

#### **More information**

For information about IICD and Monitoring & Evaluation, visit [www.iicd.org/evaluation](http://www.iicd.org/evaluation) or contact us at [information@iicd.org](mailto:information@iicd.org). The online M&E system can be viewed at <http://www.survey.iicd.org>.

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*The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) assists developing countries to realise locally owned sustainable development by harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs). IICD realises its mission through two strategic approaches. First, Country Programmes bring local organisations together and help them to formulate and execute ICT-supported development policies and projects. The approach aims to strengthen local institutional capacities to develop and manage Country Programmes, which are currently being implemented in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Second, Thematic Networking links local and international partners working in similar areas, connecting local knowledge with global knowledge and promoting South-South and South-North exchanges. Thematic Networking focuses on sectors and themes like education, health, governance, the environment, livelihood opportunities (especially agriculture), and training. These efforts are supported by various information and communication activities provided by IICD or its partners. IICD is an independent non-profit foundation, established by the Netherlands Ministry for Development Cooperation in 1997. Its core funders include the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGIS), the UK*

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